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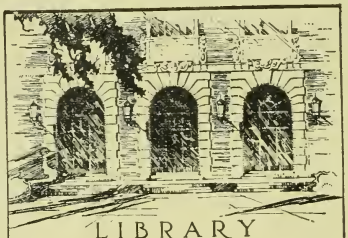

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James Payn

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"CECIL'S TRYST," "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD,"

ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	AT THE MITRE	1
II.	TWO NICE YOUNG MEN	20
III.	"WHAT IS MY THOUGHT LIKE?"	42
IV.	AGAINST TIME	76
V.	THE BARGEES	97
VI.	OTHELLO CHARMS DESDEMONA WITH THE TALE OF HIS ADVENTURES	115
VII.	NEARING HOME	139
VIII.	A RIVER LEGEND	155
IX.	HOME	172
X.	IN PAIRS	191
XI.	THE LUCK	223

CHAPTER PAGE

XII. A NIGHT WITH THE ARABIAN NIGHTS . 238

XIII. ON THE BRIDGE 259

XIV. A CONSIDERATE CHALLENGE . . . 275

A WOMAN'S VENGEANCE.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE MITRE.

IT is early summer and early morning in the most picturesque of English cities—Oxford. Nobody is astir in the gray streets; the heavy college gates, and even the small posterns cut in them (for the admission of gay young undergraduate dogs after hours) are as yet unclosed. The parks and pleasure-grounds are all deserted, under whose stately trees so many generations of youth have dreamed their day-dreams. The

quads, with their trim lawns, which have echoed for centuries to boyish laughter, are silent. The plaintive caw of the half-awakened rooks, as the swaying elm-tree rocks them, alone is heard, save the voice of Time itself—the Guardian Time, who here holds all things in its solemn keeping. First the four musical quarters, and then the five beats of the iron tongue. From a score of ancient churches issue the same warning sounds, and silence reigns again, more indisputably than ever. In other places, at such an hour, Time's voice seems to make solemn protest: "A quarter gone; two; three; four. Another *hour*, poor mortals, from the sum of your days; and yet you spend it sleeping!" But Time is at home here, and does not preach. What need for preaching, in a place where every stone is a sermon? Other cities have withstood sieges; other cities have brought forth martyrs; other cities (not many) can date their origin from earlier ages. But this one is far more venerable

(save to the mere antiquary), as being that city in which the years of man, in place of being threescore years and ten, are three, or if (by reason of idleness or stupidity) they reach to four years and over, the surplus age is labour and sorrow, and its end a bathos.

To dwell here even a year after one's fellows have departed (except the College Fellows) is to feel old indeed. To return hither after a few years is to experience the feelings of Rip van Winkle. *Alma Mater* is a hard mother, though she spoils her children. "Come," she says, "eat, drink and be merry in this pleasant place: for what saith the Preacher: 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.'" And the young men obey her gladly. But when three years, or four at most, are over, she saith: "Arise, and go into the world, and return hither no more: but make way for others."

To how many has she thus been the home and *the grave* of joy! How many have spent with her their "palmy days"—their only ones—and found the world the harder for the contrast! How many, in bidding good-bye to her, have bidden good-bye to Comfort, Ease, Light-heartedness, and taken Want and unrewarded Toil as their companions through life's long journey in their place! Even the rich leave here their blithest days behind, and with them but too often the open hand, the tender heart, soon to be closed and hardened by the consciousness of "great possessions." For while here, rich and poor are alike (or nearly so), and Liberty, Equality, Fraternity for one brief epoch reign, no shadowy triumvirate. O golden youth! O happy time! never, never to return again: each clock-tongue seems its knell.

Such thoughts, or thoughts like these, are passing through the mind of Arthur Tyndall, as he stands at the corner of a silent street, and looks at his old college—

left some five years back, which seems to him a century. He cannot help entertaining them (though in a particular rather than a general way), notwithstanding that he is by no means given to sentiment. He has been to the ends of the earth since he dwelt yonder, and has witnessed, and doubtless taken part in, reckless doings: his face, which was here as fair as a girl's, has had the tropic sun upon it; his hands, here hardened only by the oar, have made acquaintance with the spade, the gun, the sail; his beard is grown, and hangs low over his broad chest. But for the moment he is a boy again. Scenes of light-hearted mirth and wild high spirits, quite different from the saturnalia of his later days, are recurring to him; the noon of friendship, and the dawn of love. He has his friends still; and one the same that was his dearest friend at college, Jack Adair. Jack and he were always one, though so different in position and character. Hard-working, steady Jack had always had his

own way to make in the world; while for Arthur it had been ready made, or seemed to be so. What a fool had he been to anger the "governor" by his extravagance, and then to run such a muck abroad, that when the poor old man deceased, and left him all, it had been almost all discounted beforehand. If he had only known that Swansdale would have been his own so soon; and even now, if it was not so heavily dipped—— Here Arthur Tyndall stroked his beard, and sighed. In disinterring his dead past, he had come upon a regret which had some life in it; or if dead, it had a ghost which haunted him.

One, two, three, four, five, six—a single chapel-bell begins to ring with importunate shrillness, and footsteps are heard in the High Street, though every shutter is still closed. Two undergraduates in "flannels," with towels in their hands, are going to the river to bathe; they might have been Jack and he, six years ago. *They* used to bathe a good deal, and go down the river a good

deal in those days; which latter thing it was natural enough to do, since Swansdale Hall was on the river, and Jack was almost as welcome there as himself. He had not seen the old place for near six years, however: there would be change, no doubt, in it; and people change even more than places. So much the better, sometimes, when they do. Again he strokes his soft brown beard and sighs, this time articulately: "I wonder whether Jennie is married." Then: "Bah! what does it matter! I'm a nice fellow to grow faint with romantic memories. I wonder what Allardyce's opinion would be upon that subject, or Jack's (no, not Jack's—Jack is soft himself), or anybody else's who knows me. There goes the quarter. We were to breakfast at six sharp. That excellent old lady will be saying: 'Ellen, your Harthur's late.' Poor Helen! Well, I daresay I shall make a good husband, as husbands go: only, somehow I wish she wasn't quite so fond of me. I wonder

whether Jenny will be at the inn as usual."

This last reflection was made at the very threshold of the *Mitre*, but it was not *that* inn to which he referred. At that respectable hotel were located at present Mrs. Somers and her daughter Helen, to whom he was betrothed; and a very pretty girl she was—for a blonde. It is one of the many evidences of the false and feeble frivolity of the days on which we have fallen, that dark women try to become of light complexion. It would be bad enough if the case were *vice versâ*, but there would at least be some reason in it. "Black for beauty, chestnut for"—well, for many excellent things, no doubt—for prettiness, softness, gentleness, and high breeding, for example—but *not* for beauty. Helen Somers was at least a *bonâ-fide* blonde; her hair was her own—at least some of it—not dyed nor "tinted;" her complexion, which was pure and soft as milk, owed nothing to the perfumer's art;

her features were a trifle large, but then she was altogether on a large scale (as all noble creatures are), and every feature was perfect of its kind. Her eyes were blue, but by no means of an insipid blue; they could flash like a sword, if need were, and even on trifling provocation. Do not, however, picture to yourself a virago. As she rises from her chair at the open window of the sitting-room (where she has been watching), to welcome the man she loves, she has a charming air. "A Juno with the chill off," Jack Adair once called her, when discussing her with his friend, quite unconscious of the latter's *design* to be her Jupiter; but, indeed, he did her less than justice. You might walk for a week in any English town save London, and all over the continent for the term of your natural life, without meeting so fair a sight in the way of womankind as Helen Somers. Her misfortune was that at present she was always coupled in public with that stately dame, her mother; and

the conclusion to which the reflective mind at once leaped, upon beholding them together, was that the daughter, in what might be very literally termed "the fulness of time," would develop into just such another as her mamma. *She* was a Juno with a vengeance, and "with the chill off," even in the coolest of weathers. *Her* complexion had, from long standing, turned from milk to cream. She was not only on a large scale, but on the largest—the same as that on which the Ordnance Survey used to be, when it was jobbed by private persons, in order to secure maps of their estates. *Her* eyes—well, what there was of them was also blue; but you couldn't always see her eyes. When Jack first beheld her, apprehension on his friend's account is said to have caused him to ejaculate: "The Blonde, or Twenty Years Hence; in any number of volumes, quarto."

But there was one thing in which Helen Somers would never resemble her mother.

Long residence in a colony may cause persons to write little "*i*"s instead of big "*I*"s; but when you have once got your aspirates, they keep in any climate. Helen would never drop *her* "*h*"s, as "poor dear mamma" dropped hers. This was a fatal blot in the Somers' escutcheon, and the innocent cause thereof was unhappily aware of it. "It's all along of my 'uskiness—there it is again, you see—I mean *h*uskiness; ever since last autumn, when I caught that cold at Emel Emstead.' But it was not last autumn, nor the autumn before that, in which Mrs. Somers lost her "*h*"s; and, moreover, she often found them when they were not wanted. It was terrible to Helen to hear herself called Ellen; but when her mother talked of "Harthur," her kindred flesh and blood crept and curdled as though a goose were walking over her grave.

Helen was the first of her race who had overcome the difficulties of the aspirate, and she had not only the zeal of

the convert—she had the bitterness of the apostate. She was very impatient with the paganism that she had discarded for a more enlightened faith, and abhorred the shocking stories that were afloat about this family failing. There was one dreadful tale extant about Somers père with relation to this infirmity. He had been a clerk in the Bank of England, and upon a certain dividend day, being in charge of the letter A only, was worried by an old lady from the country whose name was Lawrence. "Please to give me my dividend, young man," she kept repeating in that importunate and peremptory tone used only by spinster ladies who *have* dividends. "Go to L," said Mr. Somers with sharpness, and unhappily making use of the aspirate. Instead of obeying his well-meant direction, she returned to her hotel, and wrote a letter of complaint to the Chairman and Governors of the Bank of England; and Mr. Somers was within a hair-breadth of losing his situation in

consequence. He did not lose it, however; and being a prudent man, and having a good head for business, he speculated with his little savings with success. A venture in Hops eventually crowned his efforts with a fortune, and he became a gentleman at large; in gratitude to Fortune, he took the plant which had befriended him for his crest, and its name (which he understood to be the classical term for wealth) for his motto; and for the rest of his brief existence was familiarly known as *ops* Somers. He died, leaving his widow well provided for, and his only daughter an heiress.

From that time Mrs. Somers began to "move" in society, at first with difficulty, but, as her Helen grew up, with greater ease. The possession of such a transferable treasure made the widow welcome everywhere. Nobody would have guessed that she had once been a Methodist, and thought tea and shrimps a treat. She had a very stately carriage, and might have

easily been mistaken for a duchess, if she had only been dumb. In her daughter the Darwinian theory received a triumphant corroboration. This young lady's grandparents on both sides had been very inferior specimens of humanity, residing principally at low-water mark; her parents were what we have described them to be; while she herself was a triumph of civilization. She talked French with a good accent; played the harp well, and the piano divinely; and was as well acquainted with English literature as most Lady Maries or Lady Janes—she knew very little about it. Her tastes were what they should be. She liked Blue Blood, though she did not express herself so ecstatically upon the subject as did her mother.

It was this admirable quality—which Arthur Tyndall inherited in perfection from the mother's side, though only in a moderate degree from his father's—that had chiefly influenced Mrs. Somers in his favour. He was not rich; it was well un-

derstood that Swansdale was heavily mortgaged; but his family had an excellent position in the county. He had sown his wild-oats abroad (which was an immense advantage) and he was now going "to settle down" as a country gentleman. In view of these considerations, she had "thrown the young people together" designedly, and with complete success. Helen had fallen in love with Arthur, and in a well-meaning attempt to extricate her, he had met with a similar fate; it was impossible to resist the despair which his studied coolness begot in those eloquent blue eyes; and besides, as has been said, Swansdale was sadly "dipped." How pleasant was the prospect of regaining all his folly had lost, and more, by one stroke of his pen in a marriage register! He was too much of a gentleman, however, to put it in that coarse way, even to himself; and as time went on, and this beautiful being showed her blind attachment towards him more and more, he began to honestly reciprocate it, though in a less

passionate manner. They had been engaged for some weeks, and the marriage itself was to take place shortly. In the meantime, Arthur had invited Helen and her mother to stay at Swansdale Hall, where Mrs. Ralph Tyndall, his sister-in-law, had promised (with her daughter Blanche) to join them, to play the hostess, and do "propriety." He had planned a river-voyage for them from Oxford, as the pleasantest means of approaching the Hall, and invited a male friend or two to accompany the little party. He was rather more fond of bachelor society, perhaps, than an engaged man ought to be, and Helen had pouted a little at this unnecessary addition of no less than three "horrid men" to what would have been almost a *tête-à-tête* (since mamma slept a good deal when in the open air); but Arthur had assured her that these fellows would talk to one another, and leave her sweet self and him even more "at liberty" (to cast sheep's-eyes, to press one another's hands beneath the table, and

generally "to spoon," he meant), than if they had not been there. In that case, they were welcome enough, whoever they might be. Mr. Adair she knew, but not the Hon. Wynn Allardyce and Mr. Paul Jones. These gentlemen's services, it must be premised, were not required as oarsmen. The river-voyage was to be on board a barge.

"But, good gracious, Mr. Tyndall, won't it spoil our things?" had been good Mrs. Somers' horrified exclamation, when she had been informed of this project. Her imagination had pictured a coal-barge; and even now, in spite of all explanation, she had her misgivings. "Is the barge covered over? Will it be quite empty? I hope, my dear child, it will never devolve upon myself or you to steer?" were questions hazarded that very morning to her daughter, that showed a mind ill at ease respecting this mode of transit.

"My dear mamma," Helen had replied, "how can you be so distrustful of Arthur's

sense of what is fitting! Do you suppose he would place us in such a position?"

"I can only say, my love," persisted the dowager, "that women *do* steer in barges; I have seen them often—standing in a hole at the stern, so that only three-quarters of them are visible, and generally with a red cotton handkerchief round their heads. The men do nothing but smoke pipes and swear. A small dog runs from side to side—which of itself would make one very nervous—and barks incessantly."

"There will be neither swearing nor barking on board *our* vessel, mamma—of that you may be sure; though I will not answer for the smoking. Arthur and Mr. Adair are very fond of their cigars, and it would be cruel to deny them that pleasure."

"Very good, my dear; you will do as you think best; though, for my part, I never let your poor father draw a whiff until the last thing at night, and always in the kitchen. 'Arry,' said I, 'I will never let my 'ouse become a pot'ouse.'"

"Hush, mamma, *please*," said Helen, imploringly, from the open window. "Here is Arthur."

Mrs. Somers cleared her throat apologetically, for she knew from her daughter's tone that its "huskiness" had been more pronounced than usual, and sat down corrected, to make the coffee.

CHAPTER II.

TWO NICE YOUNG MEN.

"WHAT a charming day we have!" said Arthur cheerfully, after an affectionate salutation of his Helen, and a cordial one of her mother. "What wind there is will be with us, so that we shall be at Swansdale a good hour before dinner—if only Jack and the rest are as punctual this morning as you ladies. You are patterns, both of you."

"I've been used to early rising all my life," said the dowager; "that is," she added, correcting herself, "whenever I am

in the country I always make a point of it. I love to hear the cock crow and all that."

Helen raised her perfect eyebrows a hair-breadth. "I think you must mean the lark, dear mamma."

"Nonsense; the lark does not crow, child; but, for the matter of that, I mean all the birds. I dote on birds. We had a beautiful Poll parrot once, Mr. Tyndall, who was a great pet of *your* pet's" (and here she looked archly towards her daughter); "as tame as a magpie it was, and which we valued greatly, because it was a present from a friend of my poor husband's who was drowned at sea. Only, whenever it saw a clergyman, it *would* cry out, 'Hooray! now let us pray.' That used to annoy good Mr. Bung so—don't you remember, my dear?—when he was about to ask a blessing."

"Mr. Bung was *not* a clergyman, mamma," observed Helen, severely, for (next to those of the aspirate) she was a stickler

above all things for the rights and privileges of the Church of England.

"Very true, my dear; but he *thought* he was," contended the old lady, unwilling that her favourite story should be depreciated; "and so did the parrot; so you needn't take one up so sharp."

"Would you like to drive or walk to the river-side, ladies?" inquired the cavalier. "It is but about a quarter of a mile to the place where the barge is moored."

"Oh, let us walk, by all means," cried Helen. "It's beautifully cool, mamma" (for she well knew her parent's objection to pedestrian exercise); "and it isn't really worth while to take a carriage for such a little way."

"As to worth while, my dear," said the old lady, bridling, "pray do not let it be supposed that the money is an object; you need not be so dreadfully economical, I am sure. Mr. Tyndall has been out already this morning, remember, and I daresay has had enough of walking; and since he pays

for the barge, or whatever it is, and the provisions and all that, I think the least we can do is to give him a lift."

Arthur laughed good-humouredly, with an amused look at Helen, which went far to mitigate her chagrin at this terrible speech, and assured the old lady that he felt quite equal to walking the quarter of a mile.

"Is your luggage ready?" inquired he.

"All but the directions," said the dowager. "I waited till you came, because I didn't know whether to have *The Welcome* put on the labels, or 'Swansdale Hall.'"

The idea of labelling luggage from which the proprietors were never to be parted, nor even to lose sight of it for a moment, was absurd enough; but it was in a grave and hasty tone that Tyndall replied—

"Oh, not 'The Welcome' certainly. It is true that the things will be taken out there, as being the nearest place to the Hall from the river-side, but somebody will be sent to fetch them. If addressed to

'The Welcome,' the good people at the inn might think we were going to stop there, which would be a disappointment to them."

"That's just like your thought, Harthur," cried the old lady admiringly. "You are so kind, as I often say to Ellen, to poor folks and such-like, that you will never make a very bad husband."

"Does she maintain I *shall*, then?" inquired Arthur, mischievously.

"Lor, Harthur, how *can* you?" ejaculated the old lady. "There, now, see if you haven't made Ellen downright angry. I shall leave you two together, to make it up."

The beautiful Helen was certainly looking somewhat stiff and statuesque, not to say white-marbly; but no sooner had her mother left the room than she softened like Pygmalion's statue, and, with many a blush and smile, assured her swain that she had never doubted but that he would make the best and dearest husband in the world, and that she only hoped she might be worthy

of him. Such extravagant aspirations are not, perhaps, very valuable in any case, by whichever side they are expressed, but it is surely less becoming that they should proceed from Phyllis than Philemon. She may have her faults and foibles, but it is her gentle shepherd who, generally speaking, at least, has more cause for penitence, and need of amendment. The animal Man, indeed, though audacious and self-asserting to extremity in books, and among fellow-creatures of his own sex, is secretly well aware of this circumstance; and when the Angel Woman, with drooping eyelids and folded wings, thus abases herself before him, he has twinges. Mr. Arthur Tyndall had very severe twinges, I think, for he replied gravely:—

"My dear Helen, it is you who will have to forgive things, and not I. You remind me of the pictorial advertisement that we saw upon the walls, last night, of the Queen of the Lions, whose mission, it seems, is to tame the beasts of the forest by her beauty

and gentleness, supplemented, I daresay, by an occasional flip with her whip. Doubtless, she is not unnecessarily severe upon them, so long as they bear the pressure of her dainty foot upon their necks submissively, but she never talks of being 'worthy of them.' Now, I have been a wildish sort of animal myself, dear—that is, I mean," added he hastily, at a slight contraction of Helen's white brow, "an untamed one. I've been knocked about a good deal in roughish weather." Here, whether conscious that his metaphors were getting confused, or reminded of some particular storm in which he had thrown over a valuable cargo of morals, Arthur blushed and hesitated. "I've never been used to go twice to church on Sundays, Helen, and all that," he blurted out; "but I do hope I am not a bad fellow at bottom, and that you will never repent having said, 'Yes, Arthur,' in that low, sweet tone of yours, which I love to hear better than any music in the world." Here he became inarticulate, and settled,

like a bee upon a flower, on her willing lips, with a murmurous um—um—um—um; to which she replied with a pleased purr.

It was the most absurd thing in the world to a looker-on (though the most natural thing possible to the two performers), and that was why the waiter, who entered at that moment rather hastily, was obliged to find an outlet for his mirth in a series of apoplectic coughs, as he set about removing the breakfast things. Helen vanished in an instant. Arthur remained at the open window, staring at an ecclesiastical edifice, and muttering such anathemas against the inopportune intruder as could have been invented only in the first ages of the church.

An hotel waiter with a strong sense of humour must find it very difficult to keep his situation.

Then the procession started for the river. Mrs. Somers, filled with dread imaginings as to the description of vessel that she was to find at the moorings, maintained an awe-struck silence until the place of embarka-

tion was reached, when she rapturously exclaimed: "O lor, 'ow nice!"

What met her gaze was a Cleopatra's galley—a mighty gondola, the one half a stately cabin, glittering with plate-glass and gilding, and decorated with a huge silken flag, while the bows were already occupied by sundry hampers, suggestive of a bountiful collation. The crew consisted of three men, one of whom was a horseman. His gallant steed was cropping the grass beside the towing-path, while he himself was sitting on the bank, admiring the single spur with which economy or lavishness had furnished him. It was his mission to trot unceasingly, never descending from the saddle, even to open gates; to detach the rope at bridges and other obstacles; and to call aloud a mile before he reached them, "Lock!" and "Ferry!" Of his fellows, one was steersman, who stood behind the cabin on an elevation which enabled him to look over it, and the other ropesman; and it was the latter's duty to keep the rope clear from

piles and brushwood, and to swear at the man on the horse without letting the ladies hear him. The cabin had a fixed table, with comfortable crimson couches running round it, and on the couches six Circassian slaves of exquisite beauty. But no; it was only that Helen had lightly tripped into this floating drawing-room, and seated herself in it with a little cry of pleasure, and since it was wainscoted with mirrors, her presence was multiplied six times. It was impossible for Mrs. Somers to trip lightly after her; and because the fairy craft had swayed at the first touch of her foot, she had suddenly altered her opinion of it, and now stood irresolute upon the bank, openly expressing her desire to proceed to Swansdale by railway, in preference to "that gingerbread thing." Eventually the same device was adopted that Hannibal found to be so efficacious with his refractory elephants: she was persuaded to step on a plank that she imagined to be dry land, and so transferred herself unconsciously to the centre of the vessel.

When this operation was effected, Arthur took out his watch. "It is seven o'clock," said he, "and I told the animals that the Ark would start a quarter of an hour ago. —Pray, excuse me ladies, while I fetch them."

"How funny he is," whispered Mrs. Somers to her daughter. "I do believe he means the other three gentlemen. Yes; he is going to the house yonder, where he said Mr. Thingumbob the Honourable lodged, because the inns were full. Well, it does look like the Hark, now you come to think of it, though I hope it is not wicked to say so. I do hate to think myself wicked on the water, or in any dangerous places."

The idea is common, though the frank expression of it was Mrs. Somers' own: one likes to be on equal terms with Providence, when we imagine ourselves to be out of its favour. Helen's silence, however, betokened disapproval of such sentiments.

"There he is, my dear!" exclaimed her

mother suddenly. "I mean the Honourable."

"That is Arthur's man with a case of soda-water, mamma," replied Helen coldly.

"No, no; I mean the one behind him —yonder. A very striking gentlemanly person, I must say; in a white hat, with a green veil. O dear! I feel all of a flutter."

"Honourables" were somewhat scarce in the society in which Mrs. Somers "moved," which probably accounted for her excitement. Even Helen turned to the open window, and regarded the new-comer with as much interest as an "engaged young person" could be expected to feel towards any other than the beloved object. He was not young, being decidedly gray; and when his white hat was removed, it displayed a considerable expanse of "clearing." But he had bright, bead-like eyes, into which he was always forcing expression; and a stereotyped smile, which he wished it to be understood typified the immortal youth and freshness of his nature. He had

an air so jaunty that it was within an ace of swagger; and carried a cane in his hand, with which, as he whistled, he tapped his legs in harmony with the latest popular melody.

"There is certainly a something, Helen," murmured Mrs. Somers, as she regarded this singular object, "in the air" (she said "the hair") "of a born aristocrat as is different from other people. Now, your poor pa was as good a man as ever stepped, in his own line, but he could never have carried things off in that way."

"Ladies," said the object, "I salute you;" and he raised his white hat, round which the green veil was twisted like a weeper. "In the absence of our mutual friend Tyndall, I must introduce myself. My name is Paul Jones of Llanerdovey, at your service."

From that moment of the discovery of her mistake, it is my belief that Mr. Jones became an object of personal aversion to good-natured Mrs. Somers; and perhaps

it was the consciousness of this unmerited dislike that caused her manner to be so very gracious, as she replied: "Oh, we have often heard Arthur speak of you.—Have we not, Helen? You were at Oxford together, and all that, if I remember right."

Considering that this supposition would have made Mr. Jones at least eight college generations younger than he really was, he ought to have felt himself flattered. But the fact was that Mr. Jones had never been at college, nor at any other place of education to speak of; and his keen appreciation of that circumstance led him to regard poor Mrs. Somers' observation with irritation. "No, ma'am; I was never at college," returned he curtly. "I was brought up privately in the neighbourhood of our family estate. Mr. Tyndall and I have not known one another for any great length of time, though I hope that does not militate against our being fast friends. Why should it do so, when even love itself is

born and comes to its full growth in a week, a day, an hour ?" Mr. Jones slapped his chest with his right hand, extended his left, and struck his foot sharply upon the cabin floor, like a juggler who has performed a feat successfully. Eloquence was his passion, but elocution was a difficulty with him ; and when he had rounded a sentence agreeably to his own taste, he could not conceal his satisfaction.

"What a dreadful person !" murmured Helen, averting her gaze from this curious spectacle, which her mother regarded with curiosity, not unmixed with alarm. It was the attraction of repulsion, but Mr. Paul Jones took it for admiration pure and simple.

"Yes, ma'am," continued he confidentially, "when I heard that my dear friend Tyndall was smitten so suddenly with the charms of your lovely daughter—which I am sure I should not have wondered at, even had it been sooner—I was delighted. 'Happy's the wooing that's not long

a-doing,' I wrote to him, 'is one of those rare proverbs in which the sense is not sacrificed to the rhyme. Pray, introduce me; pray, let me enjoy a few hours of her society, if not inconvenient.' And by return of post, if I am not mistaken—yes, it *was* by return of post—he did me the honour to invite me to make one in what I am sure will turn out to be a most *delightful* expedition." At the word "delightful," Mr. Paul Jones smiled so profusely that he showed not only his own teeth, but half-a-dozen others that had been supplied to him by art, with their golden fastenings; and bowed towards Helen, to imply that the source of the promised delightfulness lay there.

"Do you see anybody coming, mamma?" inquired Helen wearily, and in the same despairing tones in which Fatima inquired of her sister whether help might be expected shortly.

"Let *me* see; let *me* look," pleaded Mr. Jones with ardour, and standing on his

tiptoes, for he was of small stature, to peer over the roof of the cabin. "Yes, here is Allardyce. You know who Allardyce is, doubtless," he went on, popping his head in again, and sinking his voice to a whisper: "one of the Allardyces of Norfolk; brother of the Lord Catamaran, and heir-presumptive to the title. A very particular friend of mine; I gave him up my room at the hotel last night, and took his lodgings instead. He said he couldn't sleep in a lodging-house; whereas I didn't mind one pin. I've been used to roughing it; that is, among the moors, and such-like, you know." Mr. Jones meant the moors of Scotland, but it is not more certain that he had never been on them with a gun in his hand, than that he had never been taken captive by an Algerine corsair. "Yes," continued he, as though conscious of some incongruity, in his polished leather boots and veil, with his assumed character of sportsman, "many a night, with nothing but the blue sky above me, have I lain on the bare heather."

"Didn't it tickle you?" inquired Mrs. Somers.

"My dear madam, I had something *on*," explained Mr. Jones with precipitation. "I never forgot myself (as many do when in those outlandish regions) to the extent of wearing a kilt, and—a—slogan—or whatever it is called. The idea of carrying a knife in one's stocking has always struck me as dangerous, however convenient."

"I don't know about the convenience, but I call it a very nasty habit," observed Mrs. Somers.—"Dear me, here is Mr. Allardyce!"

"In the absence of our friend and host, Mr. Tyndall," exclaimed Mr. Paul Jones, "permit me, ladies, to introduce to you his friend and mine, Mr. Allardyce: Mrs. Somers, Miss Somers."

The new-comer was a tall, slight young man, of demure aspect, and dressed with a plainness that contrasted sharply with the taste for colour exhibited in the attire of his companion. He would have been

good-looking, but for a certain expression of cynicism, unbecoming enough to youth in any case, but when really characteristic, the index of a wasted life. It is, however, often affected, for, as it is thought fine by some folks, and a proof of their independence of position in life, to be blockheads, so it is held by others to be a great sign of high breeding to be indifferent to all matters of human interest, and profoundly suspicious of their fellow-creatures.

Mr. Allardyce had scarcely replaced his hat, after saluting the ladies, when the irrepressible Jones inquired: "How did you sleep, old fellow?"

"So well," returned the other, without deigning a glance at his interlocutor, "that I overslept myself, and have thereby committed the unintentional rudeness of being late. I feel it quite unpardonable, when ladies afford so admirable an example of early rising."

"I beg you won't mention it, Mister"——

Mrs. Somers craned at the A, but found it

insuperable, and refused the fence. "I dare say you are not much used to six o'clock breakfasts."

"I am afraid they are a little novel with me," said Mr. Allardyce, smiling.—"Are you accustomed to gorgeous river-galleys of this sort, Mrs. Somers? I don't remember even so much as seeing one before."

"Well, yes, at the Lord-mayor's show in '39 (you don't remember it, Ellen, dear, because you were not born, but your poor father and I made one of the party); and we lunched on board, just as it might be to-day; and I recollect dear Mr. Muntz, the deputy-recorder that was, being most excessively ill afterwards, and laying it all to the motion of the boat. But, then, we were rowed by four-and-twenty men—jerk, jerk—which is not like being towed by a horse; and besides, let us hope that nobody will be so imprudent as to eat raspberry ices after lobster salad, as he did."

"And is this mode of travelling new to *you* also, Miss Somers?"

"Quite," replied Helen. "It seems to me likely to prove very pleasant. I had no idea there were such vessels."

"The City Companies have them," observed Mr. Paul Jones, "and treble the size; the Hat and Cap Makers, for example."

"I venture to think that this size is preferable," observed Mr. Allardyce, again ignoring Mr. Jones' presence, while making use of his remark; "and I am quite sure that *our* Company, or some of it, at least," and here he bowed to the ladies, "will be greatly more agreeable than that of the Hat and Cap Makers. I take it most kind of my friend Tyndall that he should have invited me to make one of so in every way charming an expedition."

"Here *is* Tyndall coming," observed Mr. Paul Jones, from his old post of observation, his head alone above the cabin roof, while his three-quarter length, counting upwards, still occupied that apartment. "And I say, Allardyce"——

"Well, what *do* you say?" He spoke with the most careless air imaginable, but lounged out of the cabin, nevertheless. Not only was there something in the other's tone which was not careless, but, on the contrary, pregnant with annoyance and disappointment; but there was also a significant beckoning of the fingers.—"The horse lame? Not a bit of it, you Cockney! You'll frighten the ladies out of their wits with your mysterious communications."

But although horse-flesh is always a mysterious subject, and engenders more nods and winks than that of an average state conspiracy, the whispers above the cabin roof had not been concerning *it* at all.

"I say, look yonder at whom Tyndall is bringing with him: that fellow Adair is coming with us, it seems."

"The devil seize him!" muttered Allardyce between his teeth, while he waved his thin white hand in sign of welcome to the coming pair. "Then we shall have to be doubly careful, or he will spoil sport."

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT IS MY THOUGHT LIKE?"

"WHY, Mr. Adair, I thought you were never late!" pouted Helen from the window. "I have learned your virtues from Arthur, but I fear I shall have to learn your imperfections from yourself."

It was not a graceful speech, though the fair speaker did not mean it ungracefully. She was a little annoyed, as some young ladies are apt to be in such cases, with her lover's constant praises of his old friend: she had been aware that his opinion of her had been asked of him by Arthur, and

though, of course, it had been a favourable one (as how could it have been otherwise, since the engagement had been already effected?), she resented the fact; and she objected to be kept waiting by anybody.

"My dear young lady," said Jack Adair, holding up a fish-basket and displaying its contents, "these lobsters are my excuse, and, as you see, they blush for me. I was here at six o'clock, but went back for them to the faithless fishmonger's, who had promised them at that hour. The house was closed; and call me no recreant knight, since, for your sweet sake, I have broken, not a lance, indeed, but his chamber window."

"Adair is always right, Miss Somers, have you not learned that yet?" said Allardyce in a low voice, and with a smile that might be good-natured or not, as she chose to take it.

"Hallo!" cried Tyndall, leaping lightly into the barge, "so the real recreants have

turned up at last. I suppose they have introduced themselves; but if not, this is the Honourable Wynn Allardyce, commonly called 'Lardy;' and this, Mr. Paul Jones, of some unpronounceable place in Wales, commonly called the 'Pirate,' from his noted namesake, after whose example he has harried most of the watering-places of England, though without carrying off a prize. Jack, you know."

Jack, whom they knew, was a fine young fellow of five or six and twenty, with curling brown hair, and a complexion as well tanned as English suns could effect. He had a pleasant smile, that was not meant for show, but as natural to him as scent to flowers, and a cheery voice, that in a small room, faded persons with nerves had been known to consider a trifle loud, but which, in the present circumstances of open windows and river-air, was just as it should be. Throughout the voyage, none had ever need to say "What?" when Jack addressed them, notwithstanding the ripple

of the wave against the prow, or the wash made in the weeds behind the stern; and when he laughed, as he did now at Tyndall's comical introduction, Echo laughed too, from under Folly Bridge, and sniggered behind the distant walls of Magdalen.

"Are you all ready?" inquired Tyndall.

"Shall I lower the flag and start the horse?" inquired Mr. Jones.

"Oh, pray don't lower the flag," said Helen piteously; "I think it looks so bright and pretty."

At this the men all laughed.

"My dear Helen," said Arthur, "you must know that Paul is nothing if he is not a sporting character; his metaphor is drawn from the race-course, where they lower the flag in sign of starting."

"O dear," exclaimed Mrs. Somers, to whom this explanation was insufficient; "don't let us have any racing, pray. O lor, we're over! Save us, Mr. Tyndall—save my daughter!"

This passionate appeal was caused by the first movement of the barge; as the horse felt the spur, the rope tightened, and the keel of the *Lotus* clove the yielding wave.

"Don't be frightened, Mrs. Somers; we are just off, that's all," said Adair good-naturedly.

"Just off, indeed!" returned she indignantly; "I was just off the seat myself. Ellen, my dear, this is shocking! The water is coming in, for I hear it; you have more influence with Arthur than I have, and you must insist on our being put on shore at once."

Poor Adair, having less power over his risible faculties than the other gentlemen, had retired precipitately to shriek and roar above the cabin roof, and he was not unheard.

"I call that man a demon," continued the exasperated old lady. "I believe he would laugh if we were all drowned."

"My dear mamma, there is no danger,"

explained Helen. "Do you suppose Arthur would let us run the slightest risk? The motion is very pleasant now, surely."

"You may think so, my dear. I dare say you would like riding on a camel, if Arthur was on the other hump; but I don't pretend to do so. I feel like blanc-mange, or a swan that's running on dry land—all of a wobble."

Mrs. Somers didn't *look* like a swan: with one hand she had grasped Mr. Paul Jones, who happened to be near her, by the coat-collar, and with the other she held on to the leg of the table. "Do, pray, let Mr. Jones go, mamma," remonstrated Helen, in a whisper. "There is no occasion to take hold of anything."

"I mean to do it, however," answered the old lady, resolutely; "if he's a pirate he can swim; and as to the table, that'll float of itself when the thing goes over."

It took all the ship's company, inclusive of Arthur's own man-servant, to calm the good lady's fears; and even when they succeeded she was subject to relapses. Once

she announced that the vessel had sprung a leak—on the evidence of a tear or two distilled from the great crystal iceberg which lay in one of the hampers in readiness for cup-time; and upon the first occasion of the tow-rope breaking she went into hysterics. Eventually, however, she learned to enjoy the voyage like other folk; and when the rope was spliced for the fourteenth time, and Jack Adair made his celebrated joke about "eight knots an hour" being good sailing, she appreciated it as much as anybody, and called him a sad wag. Except for the rope breaking—and even that was remedied at Abingdon by the purchase of a stronger one—there was no hitch in any of the arrangements. "Youth at the stern and Pleasure at the prow" might have been taken for the motto of the *Lotus*. Past hall and hamlet, village church and ruined abbey, she glided on; 'twixt meadows full of sheep and kine; underneath walls of woodland, through which the sunlight fell green and golden on her deck; deep down in cool

dark locks, where glees were sung; past farms, that seemed the very homes of peace, where dappled cows stood knee-deep in the stream, and switched their tails, and stared, and chewed the cud; past villas with broad lawns, where beaux and belles suspended croquet while the gay ship passed; 'neath bridges, where the yeoman stopped his gig, the hind his team, to see her shoot the arch; past garden islets, with fair fishing temples, in which Love was worshipped by fond pairs, whose shallop, fastened to the willow, swayed and swayed as though impatient of its freight's delay; past island tongues, overrun by weed and tangle, their king the kingfisher, their queen the stately swan, whose nest, hidden by a belt of reeds, lay in the alders, where Love was worshipped too.

The *Lotus*, since the horse was changed at intervals, went fast—so fast, that in midstream, and where the current was strong, she seemed, to those who watched her from the shore, to glance by like the dragon-flies

(and scarce less bright and gay) which flitted on the reeds beneath the bank; and only at the locks, and when the horse's rider cried out "Ferry!"—not the mere word, but a long plaintive prolongation of it, which the echoing woods took up (as though they wished her gone, and helped her on her way, that they might have their looking-glass, the river, to themselves again)—was there need to tarry until the ferryman poled his great boat across, and her voyage could be resumed upon the other bank. And thus it happened that all the river-life that was to be seen that day, the *Lotus* saw. The eight-oared galleys and the racing-skiffs passed her at full swing—the oars with molten silver on their blades, and music in their even sweep; but ever and anon the *Lotus* came on them again, their panting crews resting beneath some full-foliaged bank, or passing the gleaming pewter from lip to lip, at some river-side inn. As for the other craft, she passed them all, or rather they scattered at her approach (to give her

room), like a swarm of gleaming fishes when the pike shews his peaked jaw : the painted wherry, wherein Paterfamilias plies the long-disused oar, and smiles upon his giggling girls ; the steadfast punt, wherein the patient angler sits and casts the whirring line ; the river-yacht, that shoots from bank to bank, and at the moment when it seems to touch the shore, sheers off, and with her side kissing the stream, woos once more with her sail the favouring breeze ; or, pleasanter to view even than these, the little row-boats, whose scanty crews are weary of the oar, and have rigged out a sail—a jacket, or a bathing-towel, or a shawl, perchance, borrowed from some fair passenger—and slowly drift, now here, now there, as the wind puffs, their inmates scarce awake enough to steer. Sweet is pleasure after toil, but sweeter leisure ; and, lying at full length, or propped on one another's knees, these idlers neither found, nor sought, a haven.

Among so much that was picturesque, it

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was difficult to decide what earned the palm; but Helen gave it to a snow-white swan, whose neck stiffened in angry scorn as the barge swept by her, curved down to seek beneath her wing for her frightened cygnets, who presently, as though assured of their safety and her maternal care, crept beak by beak out of their floating cradle, and launched themselves once more upon the scarce less native bosom of the stream. Mrs. Somers gave her note of preference in favour of a pic-nic party, who had landed on a flowery meadow to partake of their mid-day meal. It was a bachelor crew, and they had brought a tent with them, which made them independent of the inns at night—the beds of which, said Adair, who knew the river, "were mostly stuffed with mangold-wurzel." They had lit a gipsy-fire for cooking purposes, and one who had charge of the commissariat was reading aloud to his lieutenant a list of articles which would be required for dinner: "Forks, spoons, and salad-bowl, oil, ice, and nutmeg-grater."

What struck the men's fancy most was their very narrow escape from a "running down case." Ahead of the speedy *Lotus* was a sailing-boat that would *not* get out of the way. In vain were all cries of warning, from the shrill shrieks of the two ladies to the deep bass objurgations of the steersman. They came down upon her so closely that they could read *Laissez Aller* painted on her stern, and hear the canvas flap against her mast.

"She must be a derelict!" exclaimed Arthur.

"Then stop the boat!" cried Mrs. Somers in an agony, and under the impression that a derelict was synonymous with a torpedo.

"There's nobody in her, madam," explained Jack Adair.

But as the barge swept past, shaving off the other's rudder, there were disclosed, sitting in the bottom of the boat, and under the shadow of the neglected sail, two very young gentlemen, with pipes in their mouths and cards in their hands, playing *écarté*. "I

propose," said one; "but, by Jove, we're over!" "No, we are not," said the other, replacing his hat, which the shock had knocked off his head. "It's only the rudder gone. Play—I mark the king." Such were the scenes of humour, such the sights of beauty, that met their eyes upon "the silent highway."

It has occurred to most persons given to metaphor to compare a river to human life; but the comparison had a special application in the present case to one at least of the passengers of the *Lotus*.

"By Jove!" said Arthur musingly, "how jolly the old river looks: all ripple and sunshine here, with its rich meadows and gleaming woods; and only to think that after a few miles it becomes dull, and brackish, and beastly!"

"When the vessels that it carries," continued Helen, taking up her lover's parable, and pleased to find herself a moralist, "are no more pleasure-skiffs, but ships of heavy burden."

"That's like one's Oxford life, and what it ends in," sighed Tyndall.

"O Arthur!" remonstrated his betrothed, "that is but a poor compliment to *me*."

Arthur blushed, and stammered out some commonplace about having arrived in harbour, which was the end and object of man's voyage; but Adair struck in with a more meet apology.

"Indeed, Miss Somers, I think Arthur has said well; for the pleasure-skiff business cannot last for ever, and if it did, would pall upon us very much. It is in work of some sort that man finds his true happiness, and all our life-work is, so to speak, below bridge! Of course a man regrets his youth—the upper reaches of the river; but it is better for him when he gets into the broad navigable stream, far from the tempting back-waters that lure one to be idle, not to mention the perils of weirs and lashers."

"Was Arthur in danger from the weirs and lashers when you were at college to-

gether?" inquired Helen, with a forced smile. "He looks very guilty about something."

"I? Not a bit," cried her lover, arousing himself, perhaps from some pleasant dream of the past, but then, in the presence of the beloved object, we should be always wide awake, or only dream of the future. "I was a very good boy at college, and always went straight; or if I did not, blame Jack, for it was he who steered me. —What are Allardyce and Jones about, I wonder?"

Those two gentlemen had found the atmosphere of the cabin a little oppressive —not that it was hot, but because ladies' society had always, after a time, the effect of carbonic acid gas upon them, and they had exchanged it for the ozone of their own bachelor talk, which they were enjoying above the roof. The fact is (as generally happens on board ship, whether it be a pleasure-barge or a Cunard liner), the company, notwithstanding the varied attractions

of the river, were getting a little tired of their water-journey and of one another, and had broken into groups. It is not everybody —and indeed, between ourselves, it is only a very few people who care for natural scenery, though a great many pretend to care for it. To do the Honourable Wynn Allardyce and Paul Jones, Esquire, justice, they were not at all hypocrites in this respect, as we may learn from their private conversation.

"This is cursed dull!" observed the former, puffing at a gigantic cigar (with the lighted end of which he occasionally amused himself with raising blisters on the painted roof on which he leaned), and regarding nature generally with a depreciatory air— "dull as ditch-water."

"Infernally!" assented Mr. Jones. "What a nice game at loo one could have inside, if it wasn't for the women."

"You mean, what a nice game *three* could have," said the other significantly, "were the other charmers away."

"Charmers!" echoed Mr. Jones contemptuously. "Adair is a real charmer, ain't he? Ugh!"

"Hush! Never mention names. Besides, I was alluding rather to the ladies. What do you think of the ladies, Paul?"

"I think the young un has a devil of a temper."

"Why so?"

"Because she pitches into Adair, though he is so civil to her, and looks queer even at her lovey-dovey when he ain't all smiles and attention. How any man *can* be such a fool as to want to marry such a virago, is incredible to me!"

Allardyce smiled coldly. "Vainly is the snare set in the eyes of such a bird as my pretty Poll; but all folks are not so wise. If A. T. were not a fool in this respect, he might not be in another also, which would be a dead loss to you and me. It is the married men — if you notice — that are always our best customers. Weak with women, weak in every way, ought to be a proverb."

"That is ungrateful of you, since the sex are known to be very sweet upon *you*, Allardyce."

"That's quite another matter, Paul. Moreover, I owe them no gratitude, for it is not I whom they adore, but my title—such as it is. If my brother were to die, I should be a viscount, and then they would adore me twice as much. A title is to women what the herb valerian is to cats. They would roll themselves in titles if they could, and scent their pocket-handkerchiefs with them. Why, if *you* were a viscount, my good fellow—to take an extreme case—they would adore *you*."

"They shouldn't marry me, though," said Mr. Jones resolutely. "If this girl here, for instance, was to go on her bended knees, and implore me, with outstretched hands"——

"And twenty thousand pounds in each of them?" interposed Allardyce.

"Well, I wouldn't marry her even then."

"But, supposing that you owed a devil

of a lot of money, and didn't see your way to paying it, except by the favour of a wedding-ring? Supposing you owed just three thousand, for instance?—a debt of honour, Paul, such as it would distress you not to get paid, I'm sure."

"You are right there," said Mr. Paul Jones grimly; "it would very much distress me."

"Well, then, put yourself in this excellent young man's place, and be charitable to him: how do we know that he really cares a brass farthing for this young woman, who has given herself such airs to my pretty Poll, and stroked his feathers so very much the wrong way, that he calls her a virago?"

"My dear fellow, I have no personal objection to the young lady whatever, upon my sacred honour; I only deplore"——

"Just so," interrupted Allardyce coolly; "you only deplore her conduct. You invited yourself upon this charming expedition, and yet are surprised to find yourself *de trop*. If you were to propose to accom-

pany these two young people on their honeymoon (which you are quite capable of doing), could you blame the bride for shewing that she didn't want you?"

"But she don't want *you*, neither," argued Mr. Paul Jones vehemently; "and yet she is civil enough to you. So is the old woman—a regular stiff un, if there ever was one—she cottons to you as though you were her Methodist parson."

"I tell you, my poor Paul, that I am the herb valerian, at which the cat will jump wherever you hang it; whereas, you are, at the best, but a dandelion. Of course, it is very rude of these women to make the difference so marked; but it is just like women to do so. In the case of the girl, especially, I don't wonder at your feeling galled. If our cases were reversed, I think I should be inclined to say to myself: 'You shall pay for this, young woman; or, rather, your husband that is to be shall pay for you.'"

"So he shall," muttered Mr. Paul Jones: "that's well thought of."

"I mean to say, my dear fellow," continued the other mildly, "that the next time it comes to be a question of taking one handful or two, that, if I were in your case, I should not be so easily satisfied, so quixotically moderate, that's all."

"I've been much too good to him," said Mr. Jones regretfully, "I know; but I thought that it was the safer plan, and that we should gain more by it in the long run. But, now, I'm cursed if every insolent look of his pretty doll sha'n't cost him a hundred pounds."

"It'll be an expensive voyage to him at that rate, unless she improves in her manners, my dear fellow. I heard her ask Adair where on earth Tyndall picked you up."

"She did, did she?" returned the other slowly. "I'll pick *him* up for that. We shall have a little game to-night, I daresay; and even if his dear Jack should keep his hawk's eye on us—— Hush! I heard our names mentioned."

It was just at that moment that Arthur, in the cabin, had exclaimed: "I wonder what Allardyce and Jones are about?"

"I know what they're *thinking* about," said Adair in a low voice, intended only for his friend's ear, but Helen heard him.

"What *are* they thinking about, Mr. Adair?" She was annoyed with him for having defended Arthur against herself, and if she did not raise her voice with the positive intent of making mischief, she took no pains to moderate it. Messrs. Jones and Allardyce popped their heads into the cabin in an instant.

"Did any one call us?" inquired Mr. Jones innocently.—"The view of this mill-race is so entrancing, Miss Somers, that Allardyce and I were just wishing that you could be persuaded to bring out your sketch-book."

"Was *that* what they were thinking about, Mr. Adair?" reiterated Helen.—"No; it wasn't.—Do you mind his telling us what it really was, Mr. Allardyce?"

"I! certainly not," returned Allardyce indifferently.—"Do you, Paul?"

"Well, that depends on what he says," answered Mr. Jones uncomfortably.

"Well, that's the best thing he's said yet!" cried Mrs. Somers, clapping her hands, and laughing loudly.—"O do, let's hear it, Mr. Adair! There's nothing I dote on like conjuring tricks. When a party is getting a little dull, it is the very best thing for stirring one up a bit.—I remember a clever toy as your cousin George made, Ellen—he as was afterwards the civil-engineer, and run over in the tunnel—which, when you pulled a string, a sharp needle ran into your thumb quite unexpectedly, and made him a great favourite at evening parties.—But can you really do it, Mr. Adair?"

"I can't run a needle into your thumb, but I can prick all your consciences, Mrs. Somers. See! here are five pieces of paper. It is now nearly one o'clock—a time very favourable for a horoscope—I

will write down what everybody in this company has been thinking about within these last ten minutes."

"Lor, Mr. Adair, you make my flesh creep."

"But supposing I am correct—which, I honestly tell you, I am sure to be—I exact one condition. You must own that I *am* correct, and the subject of your thoughts must remain a dead secret between each of you and myself. Is that agreed upon?"

"It's all rubbish!" said Mr. Paul Jones. "What does it signify whether we agree or not?"

"It may be rubbish," replied Adair coolly; "yet I can afford to bet you five hundred pounds that I will succeed with you."

"You bet me five hundred pounds?" The little man had already pulled out a pocket-book and a metallic pencil, and looked all eyes.

"Yes, I will," said Adair, who had come quickly round, so as to place himself be-

tween Jones and Allardyce; "only, I must not run all the risk and you none. I have the utmost confidence in your word of honour, Mr. Paul Jones, but still it would be so easy to say: 'You are wrong,' you see, when I was right. I must therefore get Mr. Allardyce and yourself to put down—without collusion—upon paper, the subject of your private conversation during the last ten minutes (which you know I cannot have overheard). These notes shall be placed in any third person's hands—say Tyndall's, for instance—and opened only if necessary; that is, if the correctness of my magic be disputed. Come; do you bet or not?"

"No; I won't bet," said Jones doggedly, and after vainly endeavouring to exchange a glance with his friend. "It's all tom-foolery."

"I thought you wouldn't, said Adair coolly. "I will shew you the trick, however, without the money. See here. There are five pieces of paper, on each of

which is written the most important topic that has occupied each of your minds during the ten minutes before this matter was broached. I throw the five paper packets down upon the cabin-table, and perform my miracle upon the tacit understanding that nobody will meddle with them unless under the conditions I shall name."

"That is but fair," said Helen, "though I don't believe in you a bit."

"Very good: if your faith is taxed, your patience shall not be so. All is ready; but only one at a time, if you please."

"Now, mamma, open yours first, and tell us whether Mr. Adair has read your thoughts aright."

"Yes, indeed he has, my dear!" exclaimed the old lady excitedly. "It's a most remarkable thing, I'm sure; for I never mentioned it to a soul.—Why, you're a perfect conjurer, Mr. Adair. Where *did* you learn to do it?"

"I was taught it at Cairo, my dear madam, by an Egyptian wizard; and I

have never known the thing to fail. But with every experiment the details are a little different. For instance, it will now be necessary for the person whose thought has been guessed to mention it aloud."

The effect of this announcement was remarkable.

"But it might have been a very private thought," urged Helen; "one which one would not like to have made known to everybody." The fact was she had been speculating in her own mind about those "weirs and lashers"—the temptations and dissipations into which it was more than possible her beloved Arthur might have been led at Oxford, and that was not a subject for the public ear.

"I told you I should prick your consciences," said Adair, smiling. "Those who object to the ordeal have only to tear up their pellets without looking into them."

"I tear up mine," said Allardyce, suiting the action to the word, "not because I have the least faith in the sorcery, but lest

something might be written in it which it would be more embarrassing for others to hear than for the reader to repeat."

"I am sure," said Tyndall, "that Jack is incapable of setting down on paper ——"

"Pray, don't defend me, Arthur," broke in Adair; "Allardyce best knows what he was thinking about, and if I was not right, there would have been no occasion for him to read it."

"By Jove! that's true," said Tyndall. "I think he had you there, my honourable friend."

"Come, Arthur, we have not heard *your* thought," interposed Helen, with a gaiety that women can so easily assume when quarrels threaten.

"Nay, nay," whispered he; "since *you* have declared off, by reason of the tender character of your meditations, you must credit me with similar sweet thoughts." He also tore up his paper. Perhaps Arthur Tyndall, like Allardyce, had his fear, though of a different kind. At all

events, he had good reason to know that his friend Jack might have hit upon his recent thoughts without any aid from the Egyptian wizard, and he did not wish that worthy's reputation to be enhanced at his expense.

"I don't believe you," said Helen, pouting (for the weirs and lashers were still upon her mind). "If you were thinking of me, you know, you might tell it to me; that is, just whisper it."

"But we promised Adair, you know, to say it aloud, or not to tell it at all. Did we not, Jack?"

But Jack's voice was raised even louder than usual, and his attention engaged elsewhere. Something very like an altercation appeared to have sprung up between him and Mr. Paul Jones. "You have read the paper, sir!" exclaimed Adair with energy.

"So help me —— I mean, I haven't, upon my soul!" returned the other earnestly. "I only took it up; and there it is, you see, torn into little bits."

"The word of a gentleman is always sufficient without an oath, Mr. Jones. Of course, I believe you; and, indeed, if you had broken our agreement, it would have mattered little, for, in such a case, the paper would have only shewn you some commonplace word without any meaning attached to it, or else a blank. That is the way the Egyptian always confounds slippery folks."

With a forced laugh and a red face, Mr. Paul Jones lounged out of the cabin, and joined his friend Allardyce, who was standing in the bow of the boat.

"Upon my life, Adair," said Tyndall, taking up the position the others had vacated above the roof, and beckoning to his friend to join him, "you have made a very unpleasant quarter of an hour for us."

"I couldn't help it, my dear fellow. I couldn't tell Miss Somers what those men were really thinking about, in fairness to themselves, and you surely would not have had me tell a lie. It was a plant of some sort they were plotting, I'll lay my life."

"No friends of mine are given to 'plants,' Adair," answered Tyndall coldly. "You allow your prejudices to take too great liberties with men's characters."

"Well, at all events, the little beggar didn't venture to take my bet; and I believe, if I had written 'cards,' I should have won it."

"Well, and what *did* you write?"

"Oh, that is a secret between myself, the Egyptian, and one other."

"Oh, come; the Egyptian may have put you up to a wrinkle or two in the way of fortune-telling and card-sharping, in return for your saving his boy from the bastinado, but you must not expect me to believe in his magical powers, though you did take in that excellent old lady."

"It seems to me that, like all the rest, you fought rather shy of testing them, however," said Adair slily.

"Well, Jack, the fact is, that throughout this blessed voyage I've been thinking of poor Jenny. What a fool I was, by-the-

by, to come by the river, where everything, of course, reminds me of her; and when you talked of Oxford days, my mind played truant altogether."

"It should not have done that," said Adair gravely; "neither should you have supposed that, for the sake of a stupid jest, I should have played with the feelings of my friend."

"You are right there, old fellow. That was a bad compliment to you, I allow," said Tyndall, laying his hand on the other's arm. "But my conscience was pricked a little, I suppose, and when that happens, one loses one's judgment, and grows suspicious of everybody."

"I wish you would let your suspicions light on those who are deserving of them," said Adair significantly. "What sort of a fellow do you think he must be who violates a tacit agreement, and when taxed with it, is ready to take his oath to a lie?"

"Well, he would be no sweetmeat, certainly."

"In other words, my dear Tyndall, he would be a scoundrel, and yet that is just what Mr. Paul Jones has done. He is the 'one other' that shares the secret. I saw him take up the packet, and substitute another one in its place, which he tore up with scrupulous honesty. The original paper he has got in his pocket."

"I hope what is written on it is not insulting," said Tyndall earnestly. "I have my reasons for not making an enemy of that man."

"I am sorry for that, because, unless I am much mistaken, he is a ready-made one, Arthur," said the other drily. "But there is nothing on the paper to hurt his feelings, except, to be sure, I told him that the Egyptian confounded scoundrels by substituting a commonplace word for their secret thought, so that he will feel himself convicted of being a rascal."

"But what *was* the word, Jack?"

"Well, it was the same that was written on all the papers. I knew that it was

what your excellent mother-in-law, that is to be, was thinking of; and I managed the drawing so that she should be my first convert."

"But what *was* the word, Jack?"

"Well, it's what your man is ringing that bell for, if I am not mistaken—*lunch*."

CHAPTER IV.

AGAINST TIME.

LUNCH is good at all times, if you have but got the appetite for it. A mid-day meal, however stupid Fashion may flout it, with her late breakfasts and early kettle-drums, is Nature's requirement, for which more than the ten minutes "guaranteed" by the railway companies at their refreshment stations should always be allowed. It is not a repast to be hurried over, standing at a counter with somebody waiting for your place. It is derogatory to its noble character to call it a snack, or to consider it as a stop-gap; for

is it not the half-way house between breakfast and dinner which Providence has placed upon the high-road of daily life? At it we are bound to make up for our deficiencies at the former meal, and to take no thought for the latter, but to eat as much as possible, and of the very best; for who of us is perfectly certain that he shall live to dinner-time? If it be but "a biscuit and a glass of sherry," it invigorates us more than a far more ambitious refection at another time, and we are more thankful for it, though the formula of grace is dispensed with; while, if the lunch be on a scale commensurate with its opportuneness—iced Moselle cup and a lobster mayonnaise, for example—and the spot chosen for its consumption be in a concatenation accordingly—in a gilded barge, moored to the river-bank, with the lapping water for music, and the smile of beauty for light—— But the very idea of such a divine festival is rendering us as incoherent as though we had already partaken of it. Imagine, then, the gilded *Lotus*

moored beside the towing-path that fringes an emerald mead, powdered by golden king-cups and giant daisies ; the noonday sun is blazing down on the cabin roof, but all within is cool ; the river-airs blow freely through the open windows ; the table, clothed in white, is sparkling with glass and silver ; and the song of birds mingles with the chirrup of the frequent cork. Charles (Arthur's man), having made the "cup," and delicately concocted the salad, has betaken himself with the other men across the stream to the public-house, a fairy bower decked with roses and lying in the bosom of a wood. *They* likewise are doubtless at lunch, and so, beyond all question, is the unharnessed steed which crops the meadow without a scruple respecting the rights of property or laws of trespass. It is a time when even the most orthodox ask themselves whether human nature is after all so bad, or its "look-out" so exceedingly uncomfortable, as the theologians describe it to be. The discordant elements that have

already evinced themselves in our little company during their river-voyage are hushed; the oil and vinegar are, for the present, mixed as harmoniously as in the salad bowl.

"Now, this is what I call the best part of it all," exclaimed Mrs. Somers emphatically, poising a bit of chicken on her fork, and regarding these bright surroundings.

"Do you mean the liver-wing, mamma?" inquired Helen roguishly.

"Well, yes, my dear, *that* is very good, and Arthur could not have helped me more to my liking. One of the things that has always puzzled me in life is why chickens should not have been made with two livers —the gizzard being so indigestible. But I meant the luncheon altogether, with our pretty look-out upon the woods, and swans, and things."

"Take some lobster, my dear madam," said Mr. Jones; "you'll find it rhymes to chicken beautifully."

"Stuff and nonsense, Mr. Jones; I

mayn't be a poet, but I know better than that. Chickens rhymes to pickings, and very pretty pickings they are. Well, since you are so pressing, I *will* have a piece of lobster ; though, perhaps, it's hardly prudent."

"She is thinking of the fate of the deputy-recorder," observed Mr. Paul Jones, whose face had already disappeared pretty often in the ample tankard of Moselle cup.

"Don't you be too confident, mister," returned the old lady tartly. "When the boat begins to wobble again, *you*'ll be none too comfortable, unless I'm much mistaken. By-the-by, what makes those lily-buds bob about so, child ?"

"Hush, mamma; they are not lily-buds," whispered Helen; "they are ducks diving."

"Lawk-a-mercy, so they are!" said Mrs. Somers, putting up her double gold eye-glasses. "I wonder they don't get blood to their head."

At this, despite all politeness, natural or acquired, the whole party could scarcely

restrain their mirth ; the ducks in their inverted position did really look so very like lily-buds. Jack Adair fled to the tankard, in hopes to hide in its contents any expression of disrespect towards Miss Helen's mamma; but, unhappily, it had a glass bottom, through which his countenance was revealed to that lady with shocking distinctness : he caught her eye, and fled to the bows of the barge in roars of laughter. Peal on peal, they issued from his stentorian lungs, as he lay on the deck, and gesticulated—it was thought towards the ducks—with frantic earnestness.

"The man's mad," said Mrs. Somers, red with rage and lobster. "What makes him laugh so ?"

"The gee—the gee—the *horse*," stammered Jack ; and off he went again into a fresh paroxysm. All looked towards the bank ; and lo, making his way towards the horizon, and already two fields away, trotted their faithless steed !

He had mistaken some movement on

board the boat for a command to resume his journey, and there he was jogging leisurely on, doubtless under the impression that he had the rope attached to him, and was giving every satisfaction to his employers of which horse-power is capable. Then everybody roared together, including even the Honourable Wynn Allardyce, who, though he had a thin acid wit of his own, was not very susceptible of a joke.

"Paul, you must fetch the horse," said he, peremptorily, as soon as he could speak.

"The horse be blowed!" returned Mr. Paul Jones. "Why should *I* fetch the horse?"

"Because the horse *is* blowed," answered his friend coolly; "we should not have expected it of you, had he been a fresh one."

"Why shouldn't *he* go?" remonstrated Mr. Jones, motioning towards Adair; poor Paul was stout, and abhorred exercise of all kinds.

Allardyce, however, whispered a few words hurriedly into his ear, when off started his henchman, reluctantly enough, but at a good round trot, which was his best pace.

"I should think Jones had scarcely ever run since he was a boy," observed Arthur.

"Except to seed," said Allardyce drily; "certainly never after a horse. I'll bet he catches him, however."

"That is equivalent to saying you will bet Jones don't have a fit. The horse must stop sooner or later, when he comes to a shut gate."

"Well, I tell you what I'll do, Tyndall; I'll take ten to one he rides him home!"

"The deuce you will! Let me quite understand you. Will you take ten to one in pounds that our fat friend will mount that bare-backed steed, and ride him home?"

"Oh, dear me, they're going to bet!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers uneasily.

"Let us say shillings instead of pounds before the ladies," whispered Allardyce hurriedly: "I'll take you in fivers if you like."

"Very good," returned Arthur aloud. "If pounds is too much, let us say crowns."

"That is better," said Mrs. Somers approvingly. "But why not bet in postage-stamps? That is quite enough for amusement."

"Stop a bit, Tyndall; I can afford to give you a point better," said Adair. "I'll take your nine to one."

"It's fivers, Jack," whispered Arthur.

"I thought so," said Adair coolly. "But nevertheless I'll take the bet."

"I had no idea you were such a sporting character," said Arthur with unfeigned surprise. "Well, Allardyce, he's spoiled your market, unless you undersell him."

"I'll take your eight to one," answered Allardyce, keeping his eyes fixed on Paul's retreating figure; "eight crowns to one."

"I'll take five," said Jack.

"Adair must be mad," remarked Allardyce, "or have more money than he knows what to do with." His tone was careless enough, but his brow was knit, and his lips were pressed closely together.

"Five crowns to one with *you*, then, Jack," said Arthur; "though I had rather it had been Allardyce's money," he added in a lower tone.

Jack chuckled with even more than his usual zest. "It is you who will lose, my dear fellow. Look, look at the Pirate; he has neared the chase, and fired a shot across his bows."

Mr. Paul Jones had, in fact, come up with the runaway horse, and was throwing stones apparently at its nose—it was a quiet and inoffensive animal enough, with almost a too delicate sense of duty, as we have seen—but he was afraid to take hold of its bridle. At last he accomplished this dangerous feat, and stopped it.

"Bravo, Jones! Now, get up," said Jack approvingly.

"He never will—he never can," said Arthur. "To him it is a Tartar of the Ukraine breed."

"Never mind that; you don't know his courage, and you underrate his activity, my dear fellow. Mrs. Somers, Miss Helen, here is a spectacle."

Thus adjured, the ladies came out of the cabin to watch it. Instead of leading back the animal, as Mr. Jones might certainly have been expected to do, he was making the most frantic efforts to mount him. Twice he got half-way up, and twice the noble steed wheeled round, and off he slipped again; the third time, he succeeded so far as to establish an equilibrium; half his body remained on one side of the horse, and half on the other, like a sack of corn. Perhaps the clatter of the stirrups, as he strove to introduce his foot in one of them, alarmed the creature, or perhaps it caught sight of the barge, which suggested to it that it had deserted its post, but off it started at a canter.

Nothing of the sort had ever given so much general satisfaction since Richard III. had returned in similar fashion from the field of Bosworth; but Mr. Jones had the advantage of that monarch in the matter of vitality; he was very literally alive and kicking; and as he drew nearer, could be heard apostrophising the powers of darkness, and consigning the good steed that bore him, to perdition, just as though it had been a fellow-creature of his own species. All were much too exhausted with laughter to rescue him, except Allardyce, whose face wore only a sardonic smile, which did not give much promise of assistance; but fortunately for the victim, his Rosinante stopped of its own accord beside the barge, and began to crop the herbage. Then Mr. Paul Jones rolled off, and sitting on the ground, regarded his unsympathising friends with reproachful hate.

"I think you might have stopped that beast of a horse, instead of giggling, some of you," muttered he vaguely.

"I am sure I wish they had," said Tyndall, wiping away the tears of laughter from his eyes; "for you've cost me five-and-twenty pounds."

"Cost you *what*, Arthur?" cried Mrs. Somers excitedly.

"Five-and-twenty crowns; I mean five-and-twenty shillings," said Tyndall, floundering a little in his arithmetic, for he was not used to cooking his accounts.

"Was it really pounds or shillings, Mr. Allardyce?" inquired Helen in a low voice.

"You had better ask Mr. Adair," answered he, in the same confidential tone. "He is all candour and veracity, you know. As for me, I am a wicked gambler, as I dare say he has told you."

"He has told me nothing; but I like people to be open in what they do, even if it is bad."

Allardyce stole a glance at her of admiration mingled with humility. "I am not used to such noble natures," said he, and

sighed.—"Well, Paul, you are not hurt, I hope?"

"Yes, I am," said the object of his doubtful solicitude, rubbing himself in sundry places. "I am shaken to pieces."

"Take a drop of brandy," said Mrs. Somers, good-naturedly forgetting her hostility to this fallen foe. "That will settle your inside; and when you go to bed, get somebody to rub you with spirits."

"And in the meantime, take some more lunch," added Tyndall. "If there are any ribs broken, there is nothing like filling them up. Here is a galantine of turkey that will be just the thing. Come, let us all resume our duties. Jack, make some more cup; there's a good fellow."

Helen looked at Jack as though he were by no means a good fellow, and even at her Arthur with some displeasure; but she sat down again at table with the rest without remark. The interrupted repast, which had indeed but just been begun, was recommenced, and good Humour

(handmaid to Lunch) reassumed her reign. If Mr. Paul Jones was somewhat mercilessly rallied upon his recent Great Act of Equitation, he bore it in good part; he talked unceasingly; the brandy and cup combined brought out in him a hateful characteristic—a hankering to stand up and make speeches: he wished to propose Tyndall's health, and if that desire had not been sternly repressed by the object of his enthusiasm, would, without doubt, have "begged permission to couple with it that of the lovely mistress of the ceremonies, *need he say* Miss Helen Somers." The instincts of the commercial traveller were terribly strong in him, and liquor stirred them within him. Jack Adair looked at him as though it would presently become incumbent on him, as Arthur's nearest friend, to put this little man in the river. That most excellent gift, Tolerance, is however, one of the first-fruits of a pleasant meal, and Mr. Paul Jones' vulgarity, which an hour ago would have caused dis-

gust, now only excited mirth. Allardyce, at first ashamed of his companion, now regarded him with patronising favour, as though he were the proprietor of this curious animal, whose gambols so amused the company.

"Permit me," said Mr. Jones, "to sing a song." This was met by a scornful refusal. "Allow me, then, to propose a sentiment." This desire was also cruelly denied to him. "Then," said Mr. Jones resolutely, "I will tell you a story." And amid shrieks of laughter, this little boon was granted to him.

"Only take care, for goodness' sake, Jack, what he does tell," whispered Arthur.

"All right," said Jack; and he kept his large right hand just behind Mr. Paul Jones' neck, so that he might compress his windpipe on the instant, should his selection of subject for narration be unfit for lady's ear.

"I'll bet you a pair of gloves, Helen,"

said Arthur, in lover's tones, and while the little man arranged his ideas, "that it will be about his cousin, the Attorney-general of Sierra Leone—a connection of which he is unreasonably proud."

"I am not so fond of betting as some people," was Helen's cold reply.

Tyndall bit his lip; and Allardyce, whose eye saw there was something amiss between them, though his ear did not catch her words, laughed grimly in his sleeve.

"It's a most capital story that I am going to tell you," commenced Mr. Paul Jones confidently, "and one of the best you ever heard. It happened to my cousin Herbert, who was Attorney-general for Sierra Leone in 1844. Sierra Leone is in Africa. My cousin went out there with the highest recommendations, as a very young man. I suppose nobody had ever been out with higher recommendations. Sir Charles Goadby was governor, and took him by the hand. He had immense

talents as a pleader. My uncle George used to predict of him—and my uncle was an uncommonly shrewd fellow, living in the neighbourhood of Kingston-on Thames——"

"We can't stand your uncle George," observed Allardyce tartly; "cut him out of the story."

Everybody gave a little sigh of relief, and felt grateful to Allardyce; a sort of deadly calm had taken possession of Mr. Jones' audience, which he attributed to enthralling interest; and he was irritated, therefore, at the interruption, not only on his own account, but upon theirs.

"You must let me tell the story my own way, or not at all," said he peevishly.

"Not at all, then, by all means," observed Allardyce coolly; but the ladies (always pitiful, and often mistaken in their pity) murmured: "Oh, pray go on, Mr. Jones;" and he went on.

"When, in consequence of his excellent introductions, and the help of Governor Sir

Charles Goadby, my cousin had been made Her Majesty's Attorney-general for Sierra Leone, he decided upon giving a little dinner."

"*Ridiculus mus*," muttered Allardyce.

"I see nothing ridiculous in my cousin's giving a dinner-party," remonstrated Jones.

"A 'party!' no, my dear fellow; but you said 'a little dinner.' Considering his introductions, and all the rest of it, it ought to have been a banquet."

"It *was* a banquet, sir," urged Jones, asserting himself. "All the beauty and fashion of—all the beauty and fashion of" ("Ally, Ally!" whispered the narrator earnestly, "I've forgotten the name of the cursed place; it was your fault for interrupting me; do tell me")—"all the beauty and fashion of Sierra Leone were there. The room was decorated with all the luxurious vegetation that belongs to that tropical region. Fire-flies danced about. The moon, never so glorious as in that particular part of the world——" Mr. Jones was

growing ghastly pale, large drops were standing on his forehead, his very hair began to bristle.

"I knew that man would be ill," murmured Mrs. Somers, regarding him with horror.

"Where was I?" inquired Mr. Jones wildly.

"At the moon," replied the inexorable Allardyce. "'The moon, in that particular part of the world,' were your last words."

Mr. Jones gasped and nodded; you would have thought they had literally been his last words.

"If you are going to be ill, Jones, you had better go out of the cabin," whispered Allardyce.

"Don't, don't!" returned the other plaintively. "O dear, I've forgotten something."

"Your pocket-handkerchief? Here, by Jove! take mine, man," cried Adair with good-natured promptitude.

"No, no; it's not that," returned Mr.

Jones, rejecting the proffered loan with irascibility. "Stop a bit. The moon was at the full. Through the open windows could be seen the heaving deep. The natives, in considerable numbers, were assembled beneath the balcony, beating tom-toms—beating tom-toms," repeated the narrator with gentle pathos.

A simultaneous roar of laughter burst from the whole company, shaking the cabin and rocking the barge. Mr. Paul Jones regarded this outbreak with a feeble smile; it is better to know that one has failed, than to be always on the brink of failure, with the certainty of falling over sooner or later.

"I have forgotten the point of the story, ladies and gentlemen," said he, with a deprecating air; "it's really the very best story you ever heard; please to give me one more chance."

For the last quarter of an hour or so, the unhappy wretch had been talking against time.

CHAPTER V.

THE BARGEES.

MR. JONES' pathetic appeal was not acceded to, though a single effort was made in one quarter to give him "one more chance."

"I'll bet any man an even fiver," said Arthur, "that Jones don't recollect his 'point' within ten minutes."

The next moment he regretted his indiscretion; Helen, like the rest, had been convulsed with mirth at Mr. Jones' discomfiture, but her lover's speech sobered her at once. Arthur Tyndall's love of gambling had been the one objection which her mother

had entertained against him as a son-in-law; she had spoken of it to her daughter very seriously, and Helen had repeated her words to Arthur. He had promised her to reform in this respect; and yet, within one half-hour or so, and in her mother's presence, he had made, or attempted to make, two wagers; and one of them, as it seemed to her, of a very considerable amount: he had also lost it, which, in a woman's eyes, greatly heightens the immorality of misdemeanours of that description. It was, to say the least of it, very thoughtless conduct on her Arthur's part; if he were restrained by no other motive, he might have refrained from such conduct for her sake.

"Mamma and I are not accustomed," said she, "to hear gentlemen betting fivers; it makes me nervous."

"Nervous! It puts me all of a twitter!" ejaculated Mrs. Somers. "I really wish you wouldn't, Harthur."

The aspirate was very marked.

Tyndall's sun-tanned face turned a whole

shade darker. It was an indiscreet speech for Helen to make, especially aloud. It seemed to him that the woman to whose money he was about to be indebted for restoration to his old position in society was already presuming upon that circumstance: if she lectured him *now* (before his friends too!), what would she not do when she became his lawful wife! He would not have cared so much about what her mother had said, if she had not put in that *H.* He had always thought to himself: "She is a good-natured old lady, after all." —But "What a vulgar old woman this is!" was the idea, plain and bare, that now occurred to him. His nature was passionate, his feelings unaccustomed to the control even of himself, much more to the interference of others. He rose from the table, and walked out of the cabin. A dead silence fell upon all.

"You must not be angry with him, Miss Somers," said Allardyce, in a voice sympathising, if not absolutely tender. "He

meant no harm; it is so difficult to get out of what has become an ingrained habit."

Adair, who overheard this speech, as indeed did everybody but Arthur, regarded Allardyce with fiery scorn; and perhaps Helen herself resented it in her heart. If it had been Mr. Paul Jones who had spoken it, she would have told him to mind his own business; but the incense of the herb valerian was grateful to her nostrils. She could not snap *that* up, or tread it under foot like a common weed. She kept silence, looking angrily out at Arthur standing in the bows with his back to them all; but her mother answered for her.

"Yes, indeed, dear Mr. Allardyce, Arthur is much too fond of betting; that is the only fault he has. I do wish—as a friend whose advice I am sure he would value highly—you would persuade him to give it up."

If Mrs. Somers' vision could have penetrated through a two-inch mahogany table, she would have here perceived Mr. Paul

Jones' finger and thumb meet facetiously in a fleshy part of the Hon. Wynn Allardyce's leg. But as it was, she only saw the latter gentleman shrug his shoulders and shake his head.

"I'm afraid he will find it as difficult to get rid of his taste for laying fivers, my dear madam, as Mr. Jervoise, of Green Place yonder, found it to get rid of his wife."

"Where is Green Place? Oh, that house on the hill, is it?"

"Yes, and a very strange story there is attached to it, if you'd care to hear it."

Mrs. Somers did not in the least care to hear it; but anything was better than the icy silence in which the company was plunged. It was only too obvious that her future son-in-law was offended: he was pulling at a great cigar so savagely that, at a little distance, you might have taken the barge for a steam-yacht; and she was very anxious to conciliate him.

"Come, Arthur," said she, cheerfully, "and

listen to Mr. Allardyce's story. He says it is a very strange and interesting one."

"Jones promised the same for his, madam," answered Arthur, with a short laugh. "I'll finish my weed first, and then join you, so as to be just in time for the point, if there is one."

Considering that Tyndall was their host, this refusal was a rudeness to the whole company, of which nobody was more conscious than himself. He not only knew he was doing wrong, but had already repented of it, and was cursing his own hot-headedness in several tropical languages. If Helen had even looked towards him forgivingly—but her eyes, directly he turned round, had riveted themselves on the table; and "if he *had* sold himself," thought he, "he had not sold himself as a slave; no, by Jove! he hadn't"—and so he stood unmoved—a marble statue with a yearning heart!

"I don't think you *ought* to tell that story, Allardyce—I mean about Jervoise," remonstrated Adair, in a smothered tone

and speaking behind Jones, who sat between them.

"And why not?" replied Allardyce, raising his eyebrows, and speaking in a very contemptuous tone.

"Well, it is not a pleasant story to tell, under the circumstances. You will do as you please, of course; but——"

"Thanks," interrupted the other, insolently—"thanks, I am sure. Having obtained your gracious permission, I *will* tell it;" and he began accordingly: "Jervoise, of Green Place yonder, was a very good fellow, as I remember him, years ago. He had a little weakness for play, staked high—sometimes higher than he could afford—but mightn't have hurt himself much, had he only stuck to cards."

"Ah! that's where it is: you get led on," sighed Mrs. Somers, as though quoting from the depth of some terrific gambling experience of her own.

"Just so, madam," continued Allardyce: "he took to the turf and the bones."

"You don't mean to say he murdered anybody?" gasped the old lady, a ghastly vision of clandestine burial, no doubt, suggesting itself to her mind.

"No, no; I mean the race-course and the dice-box; and these two treated him so ill that they would have cost him his whole estate, but for a fortunate marriage."

Allardyce paused here, perhaps by accident, but it almost seemed significantly. Mrs. Somers was now as silent as the rest; and Helen's gaze fixed itself on the table more intently than before.

"His bride was a charming girl—one of the Ashleys of Devonshire — but I am afraid Jervoise did not much care for her; still, she was fond of him, and would have put up with a good deal; with anything there was to put up with, perhaps, short of a rival. Unhappily, there *was* a rival."

"How shocking!" ejaculated Mrs. Somers, and yet her voice had a tone of relief in it strangely inconsistent with the words. There

was no longer any parallel between this Jervoise case and that of Arthur.

"Yes, and what was worse, it was so soon after their wedding. Mrs. Jervoise had cause for jealousy, no doubt, as indeed was proved; but the misfortune was that this unpleasant affair occurred while the Jervoises were in Scotland, and in a moment of very natural indignation she sued for a divorce in the Scotch courts, and obtained it. Our own Sir Cresswell Cresswell would not have granted it so easily, which perhaps would have been better for all parties. At all events, Mrs. Jervoise soon repented of her precipitancy, and, it is said, made overtures of reconciliation to her late husband."

"She must have been a very poor-spirited woman," observed Helen.

Allardyce gave his favourite shrug of the shoulders. "I don't know, I am sure. Ladies always seem to me to be much more tender and forgiving than their lords. Jervoise was not forgiving, at any rate, though he was tender to another woman; for within

six months—during which he had some money left him unexpectedly—he had married somebody else."

"What an abandoned wretch! quite a Bluebeard!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers.

"Doubtless; though, I dare say, the 'somebody else' did not think so. She was a parson's daughter, and lived not a dozen miles from where we are sitting; and a very pretty girl. Of course, Mrs. Jervoise Number One was frantic; and she took her revenge. When Jervoise returned from his marriage-tour—the second honeymoon the monster had had that year, by-the-by—he gave, like Jones' cousin, 'a little dinner,' to celebrate his return. The guests were all out upon the lawn enjoying the summer evening, and perhaps Jones' moon—when who should come sailing in among them, with a London lawyer in tow, but the late Mrs. Jervoise! 'This is my husband,' cried she, 'and that young person has no sort of business here.' And she was right, too, or, at all events, partly

right. Though the divorce was good in Scotland, it was not so here, since the grounds for separation were not held sufficient by the English law. The matter was never disputed in the Arches Court, because the Jervoises removed to Scotland, where they were man and wife; but he was always called the Man with two Wives. Anybody about here will tell you the same story: it's as well known as the *Swan with Two Necks* there, where our men are gone to lunch."

"And do you mean to say," inquired Mrs. Somers, "that this wretch was never punished?"

"Yes, indeed; did I not tell you that he was compelled to live in Scotland? Whenever he crosses the Border, wife Number One swoops down upon him, and makes his life a burden. That's why Green Place yonder is always Let. Now, if I had been the first Mrs. Jervoise——"

"The barge, Tyndall—the barge!" cried Jack Adair, at the top of his voice.

All rose to their feet, and not a moment too soon. A heavily-laden coal-barge, with three horses, and several men walking beside them, had just turned the corner of the river, and was bearing down upon them very fast. One could see the huge rope quiver in the blue air, and hear it brush the weeds, or tear the turf where the bank was high. The mast of the gay *Lotus*, its gilded cabin, and its painted flagstaff, were all menaced with instant ruin. Tyndall, deep in his own thoughts, and still savagely smoking his cigar, had his back to this terrible vessel, whose approach he had, therefore, not perceived. But he was on his feet in an instant with a "Stop, you fellows! Stop those horses, or you'll send us all to the bottom!"

"They won't stop," answered Adair, grimly; "I know them so well. There is only one way to take, and that's to lick them." He rushed from the cabin, and had already placed one foot on the shore, while Tyndall sprang to his side, when a

sweet clear voice sang out: "Pray, don't, gentlemen. Arthur, for my sake, I implore you."

Adair looked to his friend, as if for guidance. The position was indeed critical enough. The horses were already treading on the tow-path close above them; the men, three in number, and very powerful specimens of their class, were tramping by, with a malicious sneer upon their dirt-grimed faces.

"You'll have your figure-head spoiled, if you don't get under cover, young 'oman," said one, a milder specimen of the river desperado than the rest. His words were addressed to Helen, who was standing by Tyndall's side with her hand laid lightly on his arm. In her hasty exit from the cabin, her hair had escaped from its bands, and was streaming in the wind like a cloud of gold. She might have sat (or stood) for her lover's Guardian Angel.

"For *my* sake, don't fight those men. It will kill my mother."

Poor Mrs. Somers, speechless from sheer terror, was seconding her prayer from the cabin with outstretched hands; Mr. Paul Jones had opened the little door that communicated with the steerage, and curled himself *there*, where he justly calculated no rope could touch him; and the Honourable Wynn Allardyce had thrust his head out of one of the side windows, in hopes to see a fight.

Arthur looked doubtfully from the bargees to Helen, from Helen to the bargees. He was exceedingly angry with the latter, and longed to chastise them for their brutality; his dissatisfaction with himself increased his fury against them; and, besides, unless some very strong measure should at once be taken, their pleasure-boat would be knocked to pieces, not to mention the possible danger to life and limb. On the other hand, there was Helen's imploring voice—no longer rebukeful, but sweet and suppliant. What *was* to be done? Suddenly, an alternative presented itself: he sprang

to the luncheon-table, and seized a carving-knife.

"There will be bloodshed," screamed Mrs. Somers, "gore!—oh, dreadful!"

The next minute he was holding by the mast with one hand, while the other grasped what seemed to be a flaming sword. A roar of voices from the approaching vessel perforce drew the attention of the three bargees on shore, who were plodding on remorselessly. The leader instantly stopped his horse.

"I say, what are you arter, young fellow?"

"I am about to cut your rope, my man," answered Tyndall coolly; "that is, if it comes near enough. Pray, go on, if it so pleases you."

He really looked a handsome fellow, standing up in the sunlight, with his calm bronzed face set so resolutely to keep his word, and his gaze fixed on the now slackening rope. Full of admiration, and love, Helen's eyes devoured him. In the

height of his passionate fury, her voice had calmed him, and he had obeyed it; and now had not his quick wits devised a plan which bade fair to release them from their perils? She did not know it was a common plan, that is often found to be efficacious with bargees, who will never stop for love, and sometimes not even for money. She thought him as wise as he was brave and handsome. For the moment, the *Lotus* was a floating shrine, and Arthur Tyndall the object, not only of her love, but of her adoration.

Up crept the grimy barge—no longer terrible, its slackened rope passing from hand to hand over mast and flagstaff—and slid along the gilded galley so closely that the inmates of each could have shaken hands. This was far from their intention, however. Nothing but the resolute attitude of Adair and Tyndall restrained the horny-handed sons of Toil from expressing their opinion of the sons (and daughters) of Pleasure in the strongest language: their

brethren in charge of the horses were already doing so, but fortunately the wind was contrary, and the ladies' ears were spared. Even as it was, though the *Bella* of London passed the *Lotus* without speaking her, the temptation which the gay attire of Mr. Paul Jones, still crouching in the stern, offered to the steersman of the former craft, proved too great for his discretion, and he emptied a small sack of coal-dust exactly over him. As the victim had done nothing for the common weal during the late commotion, this outbreak was not made a *casus belli;* and in the stern Mr. Paul Jones remained for hours, washing himself, and vainly striving to renovate his apparel. His absence—or rather separation by panel—from the rest of the company did not affect its cheerfulness, which recent events had completely restored. Even Mrs. Somers, paralysed as she had been by terror, rallied at the sight of the reconciliation between "her two young people;" and with the assistance of a glass of green Curaçoa, recom-

mended by Mr. Allardyce as a specific for nervous disorders, became herself. Once only did she break down again, when, having the bargees and their threats of vengeance, which had vaguely reached her, still upon her mind, she suddenly exclaimed: "Great Heavens! there's a man in a black mask levelling a gun at us!"

At these words, Mr. Paul Jones came through his panel with the agility of a harlequin at Christmas; and even Mr. Allardyce turned his head to look out at window for the assassin. But after all, it was only a photographic artist, who (attracted by their picturesque appearance) had set up his machine upon the bank, and was focusing the *Lotus*. Then the crew came back from the *Swan with Two Necks* in a fine state of exhilaration, and off started the faithful steed, this time with the rope attached to him; and away they went, with a surge at the bow and a ripple at the stern, on their river-voyage again.

CHAPTER VI.

OTHELLO CHARMS DESDEMONA WITH THE TALE OF HIS ADVENTURES.

IF the beauties of the river had been approved of before lunch, we may be sure they were now doubly appreciated. Mrs. Somers, it is true, "overcome" by the warmth of the weather, had dropped asleep, but it was only to dream of them. She thought she was in a fairy shallop with the Rev. Mr. Bung, whose weight, combined with her own, sent the prow of the boat up (as it probably would have done in real life)

heavenwards; and now the good man pointed to the firmament, praising it in his smooth, patronising way; and now he dipped his curved hand into the stream, and offered it to her like a cup; and she accepted it gladly, for the waters of that river were green Curaçoa. Helen was dreaming too, and likewise a dream of bliss. Her ears drank in the music of her lover's voice, and her hand clasped his beneath the table; and yet she had eyes for the fair sights which met them upon every hand, and a pleasant "Yes, indeed," for Jack Adair, when, pipe in mouth, he would raise himself upon his elbow from the bench on which he lay reclined, and point out some object for her admiration. Mr. Allardyce's mind was much exercised in making cigarettes; but when the demand was temporarily supplied—that is, when he was smoking them—there is every reason to suppose, since he stared at the river a good deal, that he also was regarding it with satisfaction.

"How very, very beautiful is nature!" sighed Helen: it was not at all characteristic of her to be sentimental; but the ejaculation, though conventional enough, was really genuine, and won from her by what she beheld.

"Very much so," said Jack, feeling called upon to say something himself, since nobody else spoke, and, of course, not aware that Arthur had squeezed her hand, which was all she wanted in the way of acquiescence.

"So calm, so gentle, so sympathising with humanity," continued Helen, answering the squeeze with a soft pressure.

"Well, I don't know about *that*," laughed Jack, who was truth (not to say matter-of-fact) itself. "I think Arthur could tell you another story."

"Eh, what!" cried Mrs. Somers, aroused by Jack's stentorian tones. "Is Arthur going to tell us another story? I'm all attention; I have not been asleep. I only wish I *could* sometimes get a wink or two

of sleep in the middle of the day. How nice everything looks! I've got quite to like the wobble, wobble, wob"— In her ample bosom sunk her double-chin; above it, her head nodded once or twice, like a hammer beating in a nail, and she once more rejoined the Rev. Bung.

"Why should Arthur think that nature is unsympathising?" inquired Helen.

"Make him tell you with his own—— I mean in his own words," replied Jack, who was the soul of propriety, and thought "lips," under the circumstances, would be indelicate.

"Tell me, Arthur," said Helen softly. "Or are you asleep?" added she, a little louder, and not without a touch of reproach.

Arthur Tyndall was not asleep, yet he had not heard her. He was in what is called—I know not why—a "brown-study." Men that have travelled much are subject to them; something that occurs around them—a sight, a sound, a scent even—will suddenly carry away their minds to distant

scenes, and abstract them wholly from the present. It was not a distant scene in this case, it was a home scene—one, too, that he was nearing every instant—but it was a bygone one, bygone for ever, as he thought; and such have their attraction for us all.

"Asleep?" said he, rousing himself with effort. "No, indeed; or if I was," he added in a low tone, "I was dreaming of you." *You liar!* whispered a little voice —that of Conscience, which, fortunately, is so still and small, that it is a quite rare feat even to make its owner hear it, much less another.

Helen gave one of her purrs of pleasure. The Hon. Wynn Allardyce heard it, or, at all events, understood, by the expression of her features, that she *was* purring, and scowled under cover of his cigarette smoke. He had no chance *now*, at all events for the present, of coming between these two fond hearts; the herb valerian (as I have, unfortunately, had occasion more than once to remark) is very powerful with females,

but pales before the unfolded Rose of Love.

"You shall not be so lazy, Arthur," exclaimed Helen, a consciousness that "those horrible men" might imagine she was "spooning," suddenly endowing her with vitality. "Come, let us have your story."

I believe that Jack must have guessed how matters were with his friend, for he came to the rescue with: "That shipwreck story, Tyndall. I was telling Miss Somers that nature hadn't always sympathised with *you*."

"Oh, it's nothing," said Arthur; "that is, the story isn't. But it's quite true what Jack says—nature pleases *herself*—if she pleases us, so much the better for us; but she doesn't go out of her way to do it—not she. I was once a passenger on board a ship that was burned in the North Pacific. We talk of 'leaving home' as being a painful experience; but when home leaves *us*, when one sees the vessel that has been our ark of safety for long months in wind

and storm, go down before one's eyes into the Deep, a sheet of fire—*that* is leaving home indeed. It was fortunately quite calm when the thing happened, so that we were all enabled to take to the boats, but it was not less terrible to see, on that account. I shall never forget the hiss of the waveless sea as the burning mass went under, nor the darkness, which it had illumined, that closed over us as it did so. It seemed to be a full five minutes before we saw the stars; yet there they were, shining down upon us as daintily as they will shine upon this pleasure-boat to-night, with the thin fleecy clouds sailing in and out among them; and they would have shone all the same, we may be sure, had we all been burned alive in our lost ship, and gone under with it. So, you see, Helen, that nature is not quite so sympathetic as you take her to be."

"Go on, Arthur; pray, go on. What *did* you do?"

"Well, we did the best we could, which

was not much. In the first place, we counted our provisions. No petty trader ever knew so well what articles he had in store as we did, every man of us; for we were a thousand miles from the nearest land, and every ounce of food and every spoonful of water might be worth its weight in gold. We had four hams, and twenty-eight pounds of pork; twelve two-pound cans of oysters and preserved meats; six bushels of raw potatoes (which rotted very fast, by-the-by, and were of small service to us); but sixteen gallons of water; three bottles of brandy; and one hundred pounds of tobacco."

"That seems a great deal, too," said Helen.

"Yes," murmured Jack; "I have heard of nothing like such provision since the list of stores in Robinson's Crusoe's care."

"Yes, my good fellow, but that was for one man's benefit," said Arthur gravely, "and we were thirty-one, and a thousand miles from land. Two of us, it is true,

were sick, and had not much appetite, but what they had, poor fellows, was never satisfied. It is no exaggeration to say that what Jones yonder took to-day at lunch to his own cheek would have lasted him a week on board our boat. We were put on short allowance from the first, of course; each man being allowed but a morsel of salt pork (or a little piece of potato, if he preferred *that*), and half a sea-biscuit, three times a day. It took seven of those sea-biscuits to weigh a pound. For the first two days, only a gill of water was served out to each; but for a fortnight afterwards there was almost incessant rain, which we caught in canvas, and stored in every place that would hold water, even to our boots. Those were luxurious days, when we had plenty of water, for thirst, as we afterwards discovered, is even harder to bear than the pangs of hunger; though, as to that, when folks talk of 'wanting objects in life,' and prate about having 'nothing to look forward to,' I often think of those first few

days, when we were less used to starve, and how, after the morning fragment was consumed, we counted the hours till noon and night should bring us another meal. A time did come when most of us, perhaps all of us, would have given up every chance of prosperity in this world—I had almost said, of happiness in the next—for half a loaf of bread and a cup of water; when all the riches of the world, and the pride of life—all that Art and Learning have ever done for the human race—had become absolutely valueless; when civilization was a dead letter, and our hearts and wishes were all, as it were, 'boiled down' to those two rude desires, Food and Drink."

"Did you talk much?" asked Helen.

"Not at first; most of us were too downhearted. We only looked at one another, and searched the sea for the sail that never came."

"And thought, I suppose, of Home?"

"Sometimes. I have seen this very river, for example, with its green banks and

shady groves, as plainly as I see it now, though the tropic sun poured down on us its fiery darts, and the sea itself shone around us like molten metal. I heard the flap of the sail, and the cool dip of the oar: the ripple of this rushing stream mocked my parched lips. It was not Home, you see, so much as water, of which I dreamed. —I am afraid you must think me a savage, Helen."

If she did, it was easy to read in her admiring eyes that she thought him a very noble one.

"On the contrary," said Jack, "you were more like an alderman, always thinking of eating and drinking. But, pray, get on to where you devoured the two sick men."

Helen gave a stifled shriek of horror, and Allardyce looked up for the first time from his cigarette manufacture with a gleam of interest in his languid face.

"Did you eat them raw?" inquired he.

"We did not eat them at all," said Tyndall, "as Jack very well knows."

"Oh, how *could* you, Mr. Adair!" remonstrated Helen.

"I beg your pardon for the disappointment," answered the Incorrigible One.—"Paddle on, Tyndall."

"Next to food, the hope of being picked up was the subject of our thoughts, and even of our dreams, when we did dream, for we slept but little. The nights were very dismal and lonesome, especially (as mostly happened) when there were no stars: as we had no lantern, too, we could not even see the compass."

"How did you steer the boat?" inquired Allardyce, languidly expelling a thin spiral of smoke.

"It travelled easy, and we steered by the feel of the wind in our faces, and by the heave of the sea. I have abused the stars; but I am bound to say that the North Star, though I still contend that he only came out for his own convenience——"

"O Arthur!" interrupted Helen.

"I don't say, my dear Helen, that he

would not have come out for *yours*," continued Tyndall coolly; "but as for us, who, I dare say, did not deserve it, he was not very considerate. When we did catch a fleeting glimpse of him, however, we made the most of it, instantly lighting a match and examining the compass to see that we kept our course. On the fifth day, we caught a dolphin, which we warmed by means of a fire made in a tin plate, and divided among all hands."

"Did it change into all sorts of beautiful colours when it died, Arthur?"

"Not that I remarked, my dear: it only struck me how very little there was of it, though it had to go such a great way. We caught seven more in all, and a bonita. After that, we caught no more, and began to starve. On the eighth day, our rations were reduced one half. Breakfast—an ounce of ham, one gill of water; dinner—same quantity of bread and water, with four oysters."

"Ah," said Allardyce, "in London one

eats oysters for an appetite, which you could not have wanted. Were they natives ?"

" Fortunately not, since they were much larger. But just imagine how you would feel at the club when, after the oysters and bread and butter, your host said : ' That is all.' Our supper consisted of the same portion of bread and water, with twelve raisins. During the first fifteen days, we had also each a spoonful of brandy ; but that soon failed. Upon one occasion, a small dark object was seen rising and falling upon the waves. As we drew nearer, it was found to be a green turtle fast asleep. I never remember enduring such moments of agonising expectation as followed. Directions were given for his capture, but we hardly hoped that so great a blessing should be vouchsafed to us. The man to whom the task was confided probably felt a greater sense of responsibility than that of all the directors of public companies who have ever existed ; and as for the rest of us, we

held our breath as the moment approached for the execution of his project. If he should miss his grasp, we felt that we should tear him to pieces. Silently we floated up to this floating prize, and the next instant it was hauled aboard by its hind leg. Jack has likened us to aldermen, but never did aldermen smack their lips over turtle as we did: it was warmed like the dolphins, and then divided. If heaven can be concentrated in a taste, I must surely have experienced it in my one thirty-first proportion of that turtle."

"It must have been an invidious task to divide it!" observed Helen. "I suppose the captain did that?"

"The man they had chosen for captain did; for we were only one of three boats, though with the other two we had parted company; and, as it happened, none of the chief officers of the ship were with us. The division, I believe, was made as equal as it could be."

"Are you sure of that, Tyndall?" ob-

served Jack quietly. "As the story was told me—though not by yourself—I understood the captain often gave some of his own share to a little lad there was on board."

"How nice of him!" cried Helen rapturously.

"Well, he was a big, strong man," said Arthur, "and the poor child was failing. On the eighteenth day, we caught two 'boobies.' Never were two boobies so welcome to any joint-stock company; they are about as large as a duck, but mostly bone and feathers. They were not even warmed, for the sea ran too high to admit of our lighting a fire; so we ate them raw, and to the last bone. On the twenty-first day, a dreadful incident occurred. One of the men—an invalided one too, who was too weak even to take his turn in the watch—leaped suddenly to his feet, and cried: 'A sail, a sail!' But it turned out to be only one of our own boats that had drifted across our path after three weeks of absence. They could do nothing for

us, of course, nor we for them; but that chance meeting seemed, strangely enough, to increase our sense of loneliness. On all the vast Pacific, there seemed to be no other beings than ourselves and our shipwrecked fellows. That day we made an observation, and found that we were a thousand miles from where our vessel had been burned. Think of a thousand miles of ocean without a sail! We had been steering for the Clarion Isles, but were now obliged to give up the hope of making them, and altered our course for the Sandwich group. What we suffered for the next three weeks, it is impossible to describe. The pains of hunger would seem incredible, even if I could paint them. Curiously enough, what we found most efficacious to divert our minds from the horrors that encompassed us were the descriptions of delicious dinners eaten at home, or the planning of interminable and preposterous bills of fare for dinners that we should eat when we got home again; only the little

boy had the good sense to remark that plain bread and butter would be good enough for him, all the days of his life, if he could only get it. You may think I exaggerate, but it is nevertheless a fact that, during this last period of our sufferings, we never slept; nor yet were we wholly awake. Three-fourths of our faculties were in our possession, but the remainder was in dreamland, and made feasts —always feasts—composed of everything imagination could dream of, piled upon long tables, and smoking hot. We fell down, and ravenously seized upon the first dish; and then awoke to find ourselves among our starving comrades, upon the desolate, sailless sea. It is too terrible to recall to mind: let it suffice to say, as an example of the condition to which we were reduced, that, on the twenty-eighth day, our rations were one tea-spoonful of bread-crumbs, and an ounce of ham, for the morning meal; and a tea-spoonful of bread-crumbs only for the evening. On

the thirty-eighth day of our troubles, we had nothing left but a pound and a half of ham amongst us. The ham-bone was saved for the next day. For some time before that, we had been cutting our old boots into small pieces, and eating them, and also pounding wet rags into a sort of pulp. After apportioning the ham-bone, the captain cut the canvas cover that had been around the ham into fifteen equal pieces, and each man took his portion. This was the last division of food : but the men broke up the small wooden butter-tub, and divided the staves, and gnawed them up ; and also the shell of the little green turtle was scraped with knives, and eaten to the last shaving. As for myself, I remember eating the strap of one boot, and saving the other for the next day."

" But did you really never think of eating one another, Tyndall ?" inquired Allardyce —" of drawing lots, I mean, and so forth ?"

" The men did so, I believe," answered Tyndall, hesitating.

"Well; and *you* were one of the men. Come, tell us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said Allardyce; "unless, indeed, you wish us to consider yourself the only hero of this terrible adventure."

"There was not much heroism in the matter," said Arthur gravely, but with perfect good-humour, "because, you see, we could not help ourselves. I am sorry I can't oblige you by any reminiscence of cannibalism; but since you insist upon it, I will allow that some of our people, as they confessed to me afterwards, turned their minds that way. It was felt that one member of the company must soon succumb to his privations, and who that would be we all very well knew."

"And was the subject of these anticipations aware of them?"

"Yes; he knew that he was being *waited for*, if you *will* have it. But even if he had died, I think the captain would have done his best to avert what those poor wretches

were planning. They were not to blame, however, in my opinion, though I did not share their views. On the forty-first day, we sighted land. To give you an idea of our despondency, the 'watch below,' who were lying in the bottom of the boat, did not so much as stir. They had been disappointed so often by false alarms, that they did not believe the good news. When it was made certain, however, our joy was beyond all bounds. One man even declared that the sight of those green hills was more welcome to him than a day's rations, which, under the circumstances, was surely an extravagant expression."

"But I am sure, Arthur," said Helen seriously, "that you were not only glad, but grateful, when your deliverance thus came at last."

"Certainly, my dear Helen. But considering that the sky never wore a cloud the less on our account, nor the sea (on which the sun glinted as usual) a billow, I do contend that Nature—*your* Nature—is

not a sympathetic personage as regards humanity."

"You might have proved, however, that Man was sympathetic," observed Adair, "if you had not chosen to leave out of your story that incident of the flying-fish."

"True; I forgot," said Tyndall. "When we had been in the boat thirty days, a small flying-fish was caught; so very small, that, like a prime number, it could not be divided at all, or certainly not among one-and-thirty people. So all agreed, since the captain had been pretty hard-worked, that it should be given to him. It may seem a small thing to you, but it was a treasure more valuable than all the gold in Aladdin's cave would have been to whomsoever of us should have gained it; and of course we might have drawn lots for it, and each had his chance. The captain himself very properly pointed this out, and proposed a lottery; but the men—noble fellows that they were—all said—— Shall I use their very words, Helen?"

"Oh, *yes*," cried Helen, "by all means. Dear fellows, what *did* they say?"

"Well, they said they would see him d—— first." Arthur rose from his seat, with a light laugh, and was passing out of the cabin, as though to avoid being questioned further, when Adair interposed with: "Ask him whether the captain took it, Miss Somers."

"Yes, he *did*," said Arthur—"took it like a shot; and there ends my story." And with that he walked forward, and began to question the man in charge of the rope as to their rate of speed.

"The story doesn't end quite there, at least as I have heard it from other lips," said Jack Adair, taking his friend's place by Helen's side.

"What was there more?" asked she.

"Oh, nothing, except that when the captain took it, he only did so to give it away to the little lad, whom everybody was expecting to die, but whom that little fish kept alive."

"How very, very noble of him!" exclaimed Helen, flushing up. "I should like to know that brave man's name."

"I can tell you," said Jack in a proud whisper; "it was one Arthur Tyndall."

CHAPTER VII.

NEARING HOME.

NEVER had Helen so admired her lover as at that moment, when another hand thus pointed him out as the hero of his own story; her heart even warmed towards Jack, who was too plain-spoken to recommend himself to her good graces in a general way: she was somewhat spoiled and imperious, and though Arthur (as something told her) would not stand *that*, she liked other men to play at being her slaves. If Tyndall had not already obtained her willing "yes" in answer to his suit, he might have won it, at

that moment, with even greater ease; and she almost regretted that she had it not again to give him. She wished that he would come in from his distant post beside the mast yonder, and hear from her own lips that she had found out—what he would fain have concealed from her—how nobly, generously, unselfishly he had behaved in those awful straits.

But Arthur Tyndall remained at the bow of the barge, sunk once more in those thoughts from which he had been roused to tell his story. He had been glad to tell it, not, indeed, because of the credit which it reflected upon himself—for, as we have seen, he had glossed over his own share in the matter, and was even now ignorant that it had been disclosed—but because it had occupied his mind, into which, wherever there was space, crowded regrets, remorse, forebodings. For the second time within five minutes, he consulted his watch, then, with quite a spasmodic effort, put this commonplace question to the man beside

him : " At the rate, you say, we are going, we ought to be at the *Fisher's Welcome* by six o'clock ?"

" About that time, sir ; yes."

" I suppose they do a thriving trade there, as usual ?"

" Yes, sir ; I should say a smart trade."

The boatman, like most of his class, was taciturn. If he had been a seaman, he would have had a yarn to tell about that inn which would have drawn out like copper-wire, but being a fresh-water man, he only pulled at his pipe. There was one subject, as it happened, about which he could be eloquent enough, but it did not often turn up in conversation, being Ground-bait.

" Do you know the people hereabouts ?" inquired Arthur carelessly.

The man shaded his eyes from the sun, and gazed earnestly down the river, as though the population he hoped to recognise were literally " floating."

" Not many on 'em, sir, I expects : yes,

there's Mr. Crofts yonder for certain ; and where he is, Mr. Baines ain't far off."

" I see nobody just here," said Arthur.

" No, sir ; but I knows them two gentlemen are *hereabouts.* Look at that pole yonder with the green top. That's Mr. Croft's pole, I'll take my davey. There's a matter of three shillings worth of ground-bait —if there's a pen'worth—where that pole is. I call him the Champion Perch-fisher of the Thames ; and so he is ; a nice open-handed gentleman too ; only when anybody else in the same boat chances to hook a bigger fish—O lor!" A squirt of tobacco-juice filled up the measure of admiration for which words could not be found.

" But Mr. Crofts doesn't live in this neighbourhood, does he ?"

" Well, no, sir ; he lives in London, I believe, when he ain't on the Thames, which is eight months out of twelve, however. I reckon he spends a hundred and fifty pounds a year upon worms and gentles and such-like : reg'lar chucks 'em into the sea,

as the saying is; or, leastways, it's the river. Sometimes he's here, and sometimes at Henley, and sometimes down our way. I don't know the people as *lives* here, except by name; that is, such as Lord Rowley, Squire Percival, and yourself, of course."

"You know old Jacob Renn, I suppose?"

Something had happened to the rope—the man's attention was wholly occupied for awhile in getting it free from a snag. The time thus spent seemed to Arthur interminable, so impatient was he for the other's reply; and yet, on the other hand, the delay gave him a certain sense of respite. Perhaps he had been imprudent in asking this question, which he had restrained himself from putting to others for many a month, and which, if this fellow had forgotten, he made up his mind not to repeat.

"Old Jacob as used to have the *Welcome?* Oh yes, I know *him* well enough;

him and his pretty gal. Jenny Wren, they called her, as perhaps you remember."

"Did they?" returned Tyndall. "I had forgotten that. I have not been home for these five years. How long did you say it was since they left the *Welcome?*"

"Well, it must be three year come Michaelmas; which I remember by a very curious circumstance. I was out here fishing with Mister Crofts, and a friend of his as had never had a rod in his hand before; and I'm blessed if, just off that very inn, that young gentleman didn't hook a bigger perch than ever Mr. Crofts did in his life! What a way the old man was in, to be sure, O lor! I think I can hear him now crying out to old Jacob Renn, upon the shore: 'You say it's time you gave up innkeeping, but cuss me if it ain't time I gave up *fishing*.'"

"Why don't you favour *us* with your conversation, Arthur?" cried a pleading voice from the cabin. "We have been for some time on as short an allowance of that

as your shipwrecked friends were in the matter of turtle, and yet you seem to have a large store of words for others."

"You are very ungrateful," returned Tyndall, gaily. "I was only making inquiries about our rate of progress, so that I might be in a position to count the minutes till I should welcome you to Swansdale."

"Very pretty, but rather too elaborate," said Helen: "such a cloud of words is seldom used unless to conceal the truth. Come here, sir, and confess your sins."

"I should have to invent them," replied Arthur, whose spirits had risen in a most unaccountable manner: "I have never committed but a peccadillo or two, which are not worth naming."

"Oh, I dare say! Mr. Adair and Mr. Allardyce, who know you, could tell quite another story, I suspect."

"Yes, yes, another story," cried Mrs. Somers, who had secretly been trying to wake for a considerable time, and imagined that the period had arrived for making

such an opportune remark as would prove she had not been asleep at all. "They'll tell another story to oblige us, I'm sure."

With this the whole party made very merry, and, urged by the old lady, whose energies were greatly recruited by her nap, the conversation became once more general.

"It is quite pleasant to see you yourself again, Arthur," said Helen, softly. "Shall I tell you, you naughty boy, what I had almost begun to think?"

"If it was nothing wrong," returned Arthur, comically, "tell me."

"Nay, but it *was* wrong, for it was doing you an injustice. I thought you had begun to regret, just the least bit in the world, that you had given me your heart."

"My darling, how *could* you?"

"Well, but I did, and I'll tell you why. It struck me that there was something on your mind—something in connection with the place we were coming to."

"I *was* thinking about the old home a

bit, love. I have not been there, you know, since I was quite a boy."

"Yes; but I don't mean that, sir. A man is not a cat, to be so devotedly attached to places."

Arthur frowned involuntarily. He disliked the petulant air which Helen was apt to assume upon slight occasion; and he disliked her words themselves. If he had in reality no very sentimental feelings with regard to his ancestral home, he did not wish to be told so, and especially when he had laid claim to the possession of them.

"It was a *person*, and not a place, Arthur, that I was afraid you were thinking about. 'Suppose,' said I to myself, 'I should find a rival down at Swansdale.'"

"Why, lor, Arthur, you look quite pale!" cried Mrs. Somers. "That's what comes of smoking so much with your back to the horse."

Arthur was deadly pale; and though he rallied himself with an effort, and joined in the mirth the old lady's remark had occa-

sioned, his laugh, to the quick ear of love, sounded forced and hollow.

"I am afraid I have made you angry, dear," whispered Helen, fondly. "I know I do sometimes; and I am always sorry for it afterwards. You are going to marry a very silly girl, I fear, and will have to forgive her much. There, come, you have got your dear bright looks again. Why, of course, I was not serious; or at least only just a little. Is it possible I could think you so wicked as to love anybody else? But there *is* a young woman, you know, and a very pretty one, not twenty miles from us at this moment, whom you used to flirt with a good deal in the old days. Oh, *I*'ve heard all about that, you naughty man!"

"And who told you?" inquired Arthur, straining his lips into a smile. He felt himself growing white again, and it seemed to him that the beating of his heart must needs be heard.

"Why, your friend Mr. Adair, of course

—Jack, as you call him—who else possesses your secrets? I protest I am quite jealous of that man."

"Jack Adair? Jack told you that I used to flirt with somebody down here? That's impossible."

"I didn't say she was always down here."

Arthur, who had been almost suffocated, began to breathe again, but still with difficulty, like one recovered from drowning by the Marshall Hall method.

"I said she was within twenty miles of us at the present moment.—Mr. Adair, here is Arthur pretending that he has forgotten his cousin Blanche is to meet us at the inn!"

"I am not astonished at his forgetting anybody, under the circumstances," said Jack, gallantly.

"Very good; I'll tell Blanche that," said Tyndall, mischievously.—"Now see Jack blush," he whispered.

And Jack did blush, from the sun-burned

rim of his neck to the roots of his curly brown hair, as he stammered out: "I was speaking of *you*, Tyndall; I did not say that the rest of the party might be excused from forgetting——"

"Well, *that*'s not very complimentary to me—and mamma—you know," broke in Helen, pettishly.

"I beg to say Mr. Adair does not speak for *me*, ladies," observed Mr. Allardyce, bowing respectfully.

"No, no; Jack is speaking for himself," laughed Tyndall. "Ain't you, Jack?"

This was hard measure to his friend, to whose admiration of Miss Blanche Tyndall he was no stranger; but he owed Adair a grudge for the fright which Helen's words had given him, and the rebound of his own spirits was such that he was not quite so careful of the other's feelings as it was his wont to be. His cousin Blanche was wealthy and Adair was poor, and the latter had always taken pains to conceal, as far as he could, the tenderness he entertained

for her. He could have taken a great revenge upon Arthur had he chosen; but it never entered into his honest mind to do so. He was annoyed, however, and not being quick of speech where his feelings were concerned, though ready enough on other occasions, he remained silent. An uncomfortable pause ensued, during which Arthur felt the pangs of remorse.

"I suppose your cousin Blanche is a great heiress, is she not, Tyndall?" inquired Allardyce, carelessly.

"Certainly not an heiress, though her mother, it is true, has money. Even if our friends the bargees had cut the thread of my existence, in return for my attentions to their rope, she would have benefited nothing, since the Swansdale estate"—a sardonic smile flitted across Allardyce's features—"such as it is," added Tyndall, reddening, "is entailed upon heirs-male. It would all go to my cousin Francis, the son of my father's youngest brother. Blanche and he, and Uncle Magus,

are the only blood-relations that I possess."

"Uncle Magus? Why, that's no Christian name, surely!" ejaculated Mrs. Somers.

"No, madam, it is a surname," returned Arthur, drily, "and borne by a very honourable man."

"It means a magician, my dear Mrs. Somers," whispered Allardyce—"probably the Eastern magician spoken of by Mr. Adair."

"And is *he* Arthur's uncle? Oh, my goodness!"

"Hush, yes; but Tyndall is no conjuror himself, you know—far from it."

"Well, that's a mercy, at all events. And does this Mr. Magus live in Egypt, Arthur?"

"In Egypt? No; he lives at Swansdale; and I hope to have the honour of introducing him to you this very evening."

"But your mother's name was Tyrone, I thought?" said Helen, rather alarmed for

the antiquity of the race with which she was about to be allied.

"One of the most respectable families in Ireland, as I have always understood," added the dowager, raking her proposed son-in-law with her double eye-glass.

"Well, I don't know about its being 'respectable,'" laughed Arthur; "that is a matter of opinion; but it is certainly old enough to know how to behave itself; and yet the House of Tyrone is a fabric of yesterday compared with that of Magus."

"Came over with the Conqueror, of course," remarked Allardyce. "Norman William must have had a big ship."

"My dear sir," answered Tyndall, compassionately, "Norman William was a mushroom compared with the first Magus. And this old fellow—a fine figure still, as straight as a pine, though he is over seventy, and six feet three in his stockings—is the last of his race."

"The longest and the last, eh?" laughed Allardyce. "You are alarming the ladies,

my dear fellow, who now expect to meet a giant as well as a magician. If the country were a little more level, and if he chanced to be standing up, a grove of trees would not, I suppose, be an insuperable obstacle to seeing Uncle Magus from *here*." Mr. Allardyce rounded his hand, and looking through it as though it were a spy-glass, exclaimed : "And, by Jove, there he is !"

"I don't believe it," cried Mrs. Somers, half incredulous, half hysterical. "Why, you wicked, story-telling man, that's a May-pole !"

"In that case," said Tyndall, "we are drawing near the *Angler's Welcome*, for the pole—to show, I suppose, that there is bait there—stands in front of the inn."

CHAPTER VIII.

A RIVER LEGEND.

ONE more wooded reach, through which the sun, now low in the unclouded heavens, rained gold, and then the river inn came full in sight. It was a picturesque building, standing in a garden, and without hedge or boundary of any kind save the stream itself, down to which it sloped. On the lawn were two ladies looking eagerly towards the approaching galley, and waving their pocket-handkerchiefs in sign of welcome. At the landing-place was a cart, with servants.

"Is that the cart for the luggage, Arthur?"

inquired Mrs. Somers, still fidgety respecting her goods and chattels; "why, it can surely never take all our things."

"Your aunt and Miss Blanche are waving their handkerchiefs to us," remarked Helen at the same moment. "Why don't you take off your hat, Arthur?"

But Arthur heard them not. There was a fascination for him in the place before him of which they did not dream, and it held all his thoughts in thrall. He was still young in years; but travel and peril, and a wild and rough career, had made him something wholly different from the boy who had bidden adieu to that fair scene five years ago. A score of times he had leaped ashore where yonder skiff was moored, and in the summer twilight hurried across the noiseless grass to greet his love; a score of times at that latticed window looking to the south, he had seen her face on the watch for him. By that red beech, under the harvest moon, he had parted from her, with vows of eternal fidelity—at least on one

side. Suppose, in spite of what he had heard from the boatman, she should be at the *Welcome* still! Yet, if so, her father, plump and portly, would be standing at the inn door; he always came that far to welcome the county folks; but as for the ordinary water wayfarers—the bare-legged, jersey-coated tenants of eight-oars and four-oars—the arrival of a whole argosy of such would never have drawn him from his snug parlour behind the bar. Once, years and years ago, to meet Squire Percival, who had carried the county in the Whig interest, Jacob Renn had been known to come down to the landing-place; but a great political principle had been involved in that movement, and it had never occurred again. Still, Jenny might be there. The garden, that was her pride, looked, indeed, not quite so well cared for as of old; but the old house was aglow with flowering creepers still, and what if, at her chamber window yonder, the purple blossoms of the westeria should be pushed aside by a white hand he

knew, and a face should shine forth, "looking ancient kindness" on his pain and falsehood! The soft shock of the barge as it skimmed the shore awoke him from these reflections, and he hastened forward to do the honours to his new guests. They were to be passengers on board the *Lotus* for the short remainder of its voyage—a mile or so of the most beautiful portion of the river; then, dropping through Swansdale Lock, they would emerge, not in view of the Hall, indeed, but quite close to it, and glide along its garden-grounds to the landing-steps. The ladies were already acquainted with one another. "What a *charming* day you have had for your expedition!" "Oh yes, it has been most *delightful.* How I *wish* you had been with us." &c. &c. Mr. Wynn Allardyce alone had to be introduced.

"My dear Arthur," whispered Mrs. Tyndall, "do, pray, take some notice of the new landlord of the *Welcome;* it is not old Jacob, you know, as it was in your time.

He has been bowing and scraping for these five minutes."

"The new landlord! How very remiss of me!" If Tyndall's acknowledgments were tardy, the good man of the house had certainly no cause to find fault with their cordiality.

"What a lovely boat! what a beautiful cabin, Arthur!" cried Blanche enthusiastically. "It is like a boudoir."

"Yes, and these are not all its beauties, cousin. We have a picture in panel here, painted by Bargee, after Rembrandt."

He drew back the wooden partition that divided the apartment from the steerage, and disclosed the grimy features of Mr. Paul Jones, who had hoped to pass unobserved. This was rude in Tyndall, and, as he had his own reasons for knowing, highly imprudent; but he was once more in "tearing spirits," and scarcely cared what he did. In vain Blanche courtesied to "the Pirate" with all due solemnity; her fair face was purple with suppressed

mirth, and when the laughter of the rest broke forth, she could no longer restrain it. Even Allardyce roared. Adair alone did but smile; perhaps he felt how dangerous it was for his friend to anger this man. The humour of the scene entirely did away with that stiffness which always follows the introduction of new elements into a social gathering. But for it, Mrs. Somers would without doubt have put on her "company manners," which did not become the good old soul, and Helen would have been feverishly polite; as it was, with a rustle of silk, and a "Plenty of room here, Mrs. Tyndall," the former lady welcomed her contemporary, while their olive branches forgathered in less formal fashion.

The new-comers were of the same type as those they met; that is to say, they were dowager and daughter, plump and fair, well-dressed and well-looking, but personally they were very different people. Mrs. Ralph Tyndall was said to have the best manners of any lady of her age in

Belgravia; we do not say "of her rank," because, unhappily, manners culminate at a certain comparatively low point in the social scale, and by no means improve with elevation. Her voice was low and gentle, but perfectly distinct. She talked with ease, but avoided subjects with which she was unacquainted. Her face, in place of the stereotyped smile of fashion, wore an about-to-be-pleased look, which charmed and encouraged the beholder. When she was displeased, the offender said to himself, not, "How particular this old woman is!" but, "What a fool I have made of myself," or (if a rogue), "I am afraid I have shewn my hand." But such occasions were rare. She was the idol of young men, to whom she was very plain-spoken in her sweet way, but intensely charitable. The worst things she said of any one were courteously couched, and always spoken to their faces. She had her enemies (as such women always will have, so long as there are jades and scoundrels in the world), but they were

at a loss for a bad name for her, and obliged to confine themselves to telling one another that her husband used to beat her, and had died of *delirium tremens.* The latter statement was a fact. She had suffered much as a wife—patiently, heroically—yet wept honest tears over her poor sottish husband's grave. Fair as she had been as a bride, she was scarce less attractive now even as to mere beauty, while a life of kindly deeds and honest thoughts had left upon her face such a serene reflection that any saint might have exclaimed: "Here's the wife for my money!" (or whatever expression seems a saintly equivalent). "I may have steeled my heart against a woman, but this is an *angel!*" And yet she was dressed in purple and fine linen, edged with real lace, and lived in Eaton Square.

Miss Blanche, as a step-daughter, would have astonished the saint. She doted on croquet, and when at a ball, had a preference for round dances; but she was an honest-hearted English girl for all that, and

a gentlewoman from the crown of her Dolly Varden hat to the sole of her high-heeled Balmorals. Of course, she had never been one of a shipwrecked party of three-and-thirty "waiting" for a sick boy, but in such experiences of life as had fallen to her share, she had been always fully equal to the occasion. She was always perfectly at ease, whether in the company of princes (she had danced with one once at a garden-party, and had had the courage to confess she thought him dull) or of the peasants about what had once been her Berkshire home, for she entertained the rare idea that they were equally her fellow-creatures. For the rest, she sang a little, painted a little (though not on velvet, so her cheeks were safe), read a little (novels, mostly, Heaven bless her!), and had a sharp tongue for a rival. She had an eye, too, for the picturesque, and pointed out with enthusiasm to Helen various points of beauty on their way.

"How good of you," said Helen, not

quite knowing what to say, but bent upon being friendly, "since all these things must be so familiar to you as almost to be wearisome."

"O no," replied Blanche gravely. "The more I see of the river, the more I love it. It has always new charms, as you will find. How I shall envy you when you come to Swansdale for *good!*"

"Of course she will," laughed Arthur. "She will envy you *me*, my dear."

At this Blanche beat him with her parasol; and Helen looked on well pleased. If there really *had* been anything between the cousins in old times, thought she, it was certainly all over now, or he would not have ventured on such a pleasantry.

"We are now coming to my favourite 'bit,'" said Blanche, "and what used to be Arthur's too; before his outlandish experiences put him out of conceit with dear old Father Thames. He denies that, of course; but how a man can possess a place like Swansdale, and not visit it for months after

he comes to England, is to me incredible."

"I kept that pleasure," explained Arthur gravely, "until the time (which has now arrived) when it should be doubled by being shared by the loveliest of her sex."

It was now Helen's turn to administer chastisement. "What a naughty story-teller your cousin is!" she said. "Hush! What is that?"

"That is the thunder of our Niagara, the lasher," said Blanche. "All day long you will hear its dreamy music at the Hall, and when at night you would fain sleep, you have only to picture its tumbling depths of foam to insure it. That great chalk cliff opposite is haunted."

"Haunted!"

"Certainly. There used to be a ferry-house yonder, but it has been done away with on account of the ghost. Nobody could be got to put people across after nightfall."

"Oh, *pray* tell us the story, Blanche."

"I *am* so frightened," whispered that rogue Tyndall: "might I get a little nearer to you, Helen?"

There was not the least occasion for him to do that, but she did not forbid it.

"Well, once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a lock-keeper at Swansdale who had a very charming daughter. Her name was Janet, and she was the toast of the river."

"They called her 'the Fair One of the Golden *Locks*,'" interpolated Tyndall.

"Be quiet, sir. Well, her pretty head got turned by the attentions of the gentlemen-boatmen, and instead of wedding the young ferryman to whom she was engaged, and in whose company she would doubtless have crossed safely the river of Life, she married above her station. She had no one to blame but herself, for even her father disapproved of the gentleman she had chosen—a wild extravagant young man, belonging, if I remember right, to some regiment quartered at Windsor: but

she *would* have him, and paid a sad penalty for it. He ill-treated her, and she ran away from him."

"With somebody else," observed Arthur, by way of chorus.

"I am afraid she did," continued Blanche; "but, at all events, what her poor father heard of her was so bad, that it was almost a relief to him when he heard nothing at all, and began to conclude that she was dead. Just before dawn on a certain summer morning, he was aroused by that cry of 'Lock! Lock! Lock!' which you have heard so many times to-day; but musical and melancholy as it always is, there was something in its tones that sounded to the old man's ear much more pathetic and plaintive than usual. It was a woman's voice, too, which it was rare to hear, and especially at such an hour. He rose and dressed himself, and came out upon the little bridge. The day was breaking, and the mist lay on the river, so that he couldn't see up-stream; but the low sweet call came

nearer and nearer, and he began to open the gates. There was no sound of oars, however, nor beat of hoof; nothing save that pitiful cry and the roar of the lasher, which he was too familiar with to hear, broke the silence of the dawn. Presently, the cry was repeated, apparently at his very feet, and out of the silver mist floated into the lock itself his lost daughter, Janet! Dead, drowned, with her golden hair floating about her like river-weed, and her hands clasped over her heart, she had come home at last!"

"Poor soul!" sighed Helen. "Did it not break her father's heart?"

"Yes. He took that ghostly call for a summons to the tomb, and died; and what was worse, the poor ferryman, her lover, was summoned also; for every succeeding night there was a cry of 'Ferry!' 'Ferry!' 'Ferry!' 'Fer!' 'Fer!' 'Fer!' 'Ferry!' coming through the mist, and echoing with pitiful importunity from the chalk-pit—and the voice was a woman's voice that he well

knew. He never dared to answer that appeal, and when real people, passengers of flesh and blood, demanded his services at night, he would not give them. And so the ferry was done away with."

"Really! For that very reason?" inquired Helen.

"Yes, my dear," said Arthur: "the story was said to have been invented by the clerk of the Thames Commissioners for an excuse to reduce their staff."

"You know it's true, Arthur," insisted Blanche; "and also that the chalk cliff is haunted by all three of them."

"Yes! they play dummy-whist together," asserted the Incorrigible. "In the early summer mornings, you may hear them calling for trumps, and crying 'Treble, treble, tre—tre—tre—tre—treble, and the rub.'"

"You may laugh as you please, cousin; but all I know is, that the call only ceased when the poor ferryman died——"

"And when the ferry was abolished, you should have added," said Tyndall.

"Singularly enough, the cry of 'Lock!' is still occasionally heard."

As though to corroborate this statement, the tremulous call 'Lock, lock, lock!' was raised by the horseman at this moment, and repeated in plaintive tones by the chalk-pit; and the great gates were seen closed before them, as though the river had found its end. On the right hand, however, some portion of it made its way over the lasher, above whose roaring depths the feathery spray hung like a cloud. The trees, save for the towing-path, came down on each side to the water's edge; and between the lasher and the lock was a green island with the trim cottage of the gate-keeper, standing in a blaze of flowers.

"How charming, how exquisite!" exclaimed Helen.

"Dear heart, how pretty!" cried Mrs. Somers.

"I knew you would admire it," said Blanche proudly; "it is the gem of the Thames."

The ladies all emerged from the cabin the better to behold this beautiful scene. Since the arrival of the new-comers, Adair had been making himself agreeable to the two elder ladies. If his ears had listened greedily to Blanche's voice as it narrated the river-legend, his eyes had not wandered towards her, but had fixed themselves ever and anon with a pained anxious glance on his unconscious friend. Now that the opportunity offered, he drew quite close to Arthur, and, while affecting to be admiring nature with the rest, addressed him thus in a low tone: "Be careful, Tyndall. You will see an old friend at the lock—the people at the *Welcome* told me——"

"Great Heaven! you don't mean——"

"Hush! yes."

No name was spoken, but Arthur read on his friend's finger-guarded lips, two words: "*It's Jenny.*"

CHAPTER IX.

HOME.

SLOWLY and sullenly the great gates parted before them, and the *Lotus* glided into the lock. It was not a short-handed establishment, as many of those had been through which they had passed that day, and where the help of their own crew had been gladly accepted, for two men worked the winches, while another looked on with a pipe in his mouth. This on-looker was a stout old fellow in decent black, whose duties seemed to be confined to fishing for sixpences with a little landing-net at the end of a long pole,

and to seeing that nobody trod upon the flower-pots that adorned the sloping lawn. Even the grass itself he would have kept sacred if he could.

"Keep to the stone, gentlemen, if *you* please," exclaimed he, as Adair and Allardyce jumped out, according to their custom, to stretch their legs; while the barge sank to the required level. "The sward is slippery, and an accident soon happens.—Why, bless my soul, Mr. Adair, how are you? Surprised to see old Jacob here, I daresay? The fact is, though I gave up the inn, I found I couldn't live away from the old place, so I bought out the lock-keeper, and here I am, with all the work done for me. That suits me to a nicety. You know young Mr. Tyndall is coming back to-day, I suppose?—What! you've got him there?—Why, Master Arthur, how *do* you do?"

Tyndall had come out of the cabin, reluctantly enough, to receive the old man's hearty salutation, and not without difficulty

reached the shore, for the boat was sinking rapidly. It was some comfort to him to reflect that in another moment or two he would be concealed from the observation of its tenants.

"The idea of your trying to slip by without saying 'How d'ye do?' to old friends! Lawk-a-mercy, how brown and hearty you do look! Jenny, Jenny!——"

As he raised his voice, calling to some one in the house, Arthur cast a hasty glance towards the barge, but it was already out of sight.

"Here's Mr. Arthur, Jenny; come out and greet him, wench! Lor bless us, it don't seem but yesterday when you left us! I remember your coming down the last night to the *Welcome*, and I opened a bottle of champagne—ah, that I did—to drink you luck. And you've had luck to, if all I've heard is true. Got a pretty wife, hasn't ye, with plenty of money?—Here, Jenny, lass, here's Mr. Arthur; come and bid him joy!"

The name of Jacob Renn's daughter was in reality Alice, but she was always called Jenny Wren—chiefly, doubtless, from the temptation of the pun, but also from a certain bird-like brightness and vivacity that distinguished her. Bright as a bird she was, with cheeks as brown as the berry it feeds on, yet without touch of coarseness. On the contrary, except in the eyes of those who deem Nature herself vulgar, her appearance was essentially refined. Her rich brown hair was so long and plentiful, that, so far from needing dead women's locks, or a horse-tail, to plump it out, she had much ado to stow it away in a queenly crown. She was tall, but of an exquisite figure, and though simply dressed in very sober colours, looked every inch a lady. And yet it was neither her beauty nor her grace that struck the observant eye, so much as the extraordinary intelligence of her expression. Her face did not need a smile to win you; her brow and eyes attracted you at once. To be sure, on most occasions, her eyes did

duty for her lips in the way of smiles; but they did not do so now. They were very grave and steady, though not sad, as she stood at the cottage-door with outstretched hand to greet Arthur Tyndall.

"Why, Jenny, how you are grown!" said he. Though the rest were out of earshot, thanks to the roar of the lasher, his tone was studiously careless, but there was a tremor in it which all his efforts could not conceal.

"Yes," answered she, significantly; "grown out of all knowledge."

"O Jenny, spare me!" answered he, in low earnest tones; "you don't know all."

He would have retained her hand, but she withdrew it from his passionate grasp.

"Why *should* I know?" said she, quietly. "I have neither the right nor the desire to do so."

She had drawn herself up to her full height; but her eyes spoke neither haughtiness nor reproach, only quiet decision.

"If you have not the desire, Jenny,

you must think me in your heart a scoundrel."

The colour mounted to her glorious forehead; but she shook her head.

"Give me ten minutes," he went on, "only ten minutes—alone——"

"Not five, not one," she answered. "It would be both wrong and cruel."

"That is what you said when, in your unselfish generosity, you forbade me to write to you; and see what has come of *that!*" replied he, bitterly.

The warm blood left her cheeks even more quickly than it had come; her whole frame trembled, and she put out one hand, and grasped the pole of the verandah. He saw her weakness, and would have given the world to have rushed forward and placed his arm around her, but he dared not.

"For what is past, I do not blame myself, nor you—Mr. Tyndall," answered she, faintly. "But I should blame myself, indeed, if I suffered you to renew—I mean,

if I assumed a right to ask for an explanation of your conduct, or permitted you to give one. Your friends are waiting for you yonder."

"To-morrow and every other day," gasped Arthur, desperately, "at the same hour and place as——Jenny, Jenny!" But, with a gesture of annoyance and disdain, the girl had withdrawn into the cottage, whither he felt it would be madness to follow her. The barge was full in sight, waiting for him by the shore beneath the lock, and all eyes might be upon him. One pair of eyes, which he had not bargained for, was watching him with great intentness, the owner whereof stood on the little bridge across which he needs must go to gain the boat.

"Why, Glyddon," cried Tyndall, as he turned and recognised this personage, who had a fishing-rod in his hand, "did you spring out of the lock? I never saw you when I landed."

"I have been looking for your arrival these two hours," said the other, shaking

hands with him heartily, "and to pass the time, have been fishing off the weir! Welcome home, Tyndall! And especially do I give you joy upon another account. Hark! that is what our bells are saying also."

Above the roar of the waters came plunging through the air the first notes of a merry peal from the church-tower, just visible above the more distant trees.

"In a few weeks more, I suppose, they will be ringing on a still more joyful occasion?"

"I suppose so—that is, I have every reason to hope they will," returned Arthur. "Have you been introduced to Miss Somers?"

"Yes; Adair did me that honour; then sent me back to call you. You paid no notice to his outcries, he said, but would doubtless hear the church. Our friend Jack is as funny as ever."

"My ear is not so accustomed to the noise of the lasher as it used to be," explained Arthur; "I can scarcely hear my-

self speak here; so let us move on. How is the flock? I see by your looks that I need not inquire after their shepherd."

The Rev. Charles Glyddon was certainly a healthy-looking man enough, though far from handsome. He was very tall and angular; had such high cheek-bones that he seemed to look over them with difficulty, as a cow looks over a wall; and though a college contemporary of Arthur's, at whose recommendation his father had given him the living of Swansdale, had no air of youth about him. Notwithstanding his present pursuit, he wore full canonical attire: *videlicet*, a silk waistcoat without buttons—how he got into which, was a standing miracle to most of his congregation—and a white tie of great stiffness and altitude.

"The flock is well," he said, "and especially the lambs are flourishing, thanks to the good teaching of Miss Alice Renn—"

"What! does Jenny still teach?" asked Tyndall, with a sudden interest, that con-

trasted strangely with his previous lukewarm manner.

"Certainly; though we have given up calling her Jenny. Our school could ill spare her services. She has fortunately plenty of leisure on her hands; for the old man seems to have made his fortune at the *Welcome*, where, however, she was sadly out of place."

"Yes, indeed," laughed Tyndall. "Do you remember how old Jacob used to boast of her having had an offer of marriage from a lord? And so she had, I believe: a lord in the upper remove fifth form at Eton, aged fifteen years and a half. She used to be called the Toast-of-the-Thames."

"I remember to have heard so," said the rector, gravely. "It was a very painful position altogether."

"What on earth has kept you all this time, Arthur?" exclaimed a chorus of female voices, for the two had now reached the barge.

"The church," answered Arthur, piously:

"I was listening to this reverend man. He wants subscriptions for the repair of the chancel."

"Really, Tyndall, you are too bad," said the rector, reprovingly.

"I told him, from what I knew of Allardyce, that I was sure he was good for a painted window, and we have put down Paul Jones for a gargoyle."

"You have only to take a cast of his expressive countenance," observed Allardyce.

"Or if you want any brass ornaments, melt it," suggested Tyndall.

"I owe you one for that," muttered Mr. Paul Jones, between his teeth.

"Never mind, Paul; it's the first I O U he has ever got out of *you*," whispered his cynical friend.—"Come, Tyndall, confess what was the attraction at the cottage that kept you so long away."

"I know," said Jack, coolly; "but perhaps it would be hardly right to tell."

Mr. Glyddon, who had come on board the barge, now slowly poled upon its way,

looked up sharply at the speaker. Arthur's eyes wandered nervously towards Helen. Had she caught sight of Jenny or not? he wondered. He did not doubt his friend's goodwill or prudence; but perhaps it would be necessary for Jack to say something to which it must needs be embarrassing and painful for him to listen.

"Come, out with it!" said Allardyce, coarsely. "His father-confessor is here to give him absolution."

The rector frowned, not because the observation was personally rude, though, considering the speaker was a stranger, it undoubtedly was so, but because he disliked jesting on such subjects.

"Well, as I remember Tyndall in our old river-days," continued Adair, "he never could pass that cottage without testing its famous tap of shandy-gaff—beer and ginger-beer, ladies, no worse."

Helen's face was clouded.

She *had* seen Jenny, then, thought Arthur, and evidently resented this lame

explanation of his conduct; she would now imagine that the girl had been always at the lock, and had formed its attraction for him, which would be making matters even worse than they were.

"I don't think 'shandy-gaff' would have been quite a sufficient excuse for Arthur keeping us all waiting, Mr. Adair," observed Mrs. Ralph Tyndall, in her gentle tones; "but I should have thought very ill of him if he had not given a few minutes to his old friend and playfellow, Alice Renn.—Her father used to keep the *Welcome*, Helen, when Arthur was quite a boy; and though he left it for some years, the charms of the old place, it seems, proved too strong for him, for he came back some months ago, and took the lock cottage; though, to look at the old man, you would scarce have given him credit for such sentiment."

"No, indeed," said Helen, once more all smiles. "And yet I do not wonder at any effect produced by the scenery of Swansdale. How grandly the gray church-tower

stands out against the sky yonder! And, O Arthur! is that beautiful place the Hall?"

"Yes, dear, that is the Hall, or at least the roof of it." He was really gratified that the place he could still call his own, in spite of waste and revel, awoke such evident admiration. "The interior will want a good deal of what your good mother calls 'setting to rights,' and no doubt will therein afford you an opportunity of showing your excellent good taste," he whispered; "but it is picturesque enough outside."

Swansdale Hall was more than picturesque; it was a really noble mansion, and of considerable antiquity.

"Did you say the Hall was in sight?" asked Mrs. Somers, nervously, "O dear me, yes; I see it now. Very pretty, I'm sure, though not quite so spacious as I had expected."

"Nay, my dear madam, the Hall is hidden by the trees again just here," explained

Arthur, smiling. "That is the cottage where Uncle Magus lives, and this is his garden. One of his few pleasures is the cultivation of roses, and many a prize has he taken at the flower-shows for them."

The shore was indeed here a bank of roses, the odour from which filled all the air. The cottage itself, with its carved porch and mullioned windows, was but a gymnasium for them whereon to climb, and cling, and hang, peering inquisitively, head downward, and with flushed faces, against the latticed panes, or struggling, by means of the quaint gables, to reach the roof. Beneath this fairy dwelling was a boat-house, the gates of which had been already opened to admit the barge.

"Welcome to Swansdale;" exclaimed Tyndall, graciously, as they glided in.

"Welcome home!" answered a grave clear voice.

On a wooden gallery which ran round the boat-house, and at the top of the steps

that led down to the water, stood a gigantic figure, clothed in black velvet, and with a long white beard.

"Lawk-a-mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Somers, beneath her breath.

"Uncle Magus," cried Arthur, leaping out, and clasping the old man's hand, "let me introduce you to my friends."

As each of the company came up the steps, the old man saluted them in different fashion. To the rector he offered his whole hand; to Jack Adair he gave a couple of fingers; to Allardyce and Paul Jones, a stately inclination of the head; Mrs. Ralph and Blanche he kissed upon the cheek; Helen he held at arm's length, regarding her attentively for some moments, and then pressed his lips to her brow.

"What will he do to *me?*" was the agonised thought of Mrs. Somers, as she regarded these proceedings, for, for some, to her, inexplicable reason, she had been kept by Arthur to the last, as a *bonne bouche* for this ogre.

"I shall make *you*, madam, my peculiar care," said the old gentleman gallantly, and lifting her gloved hand to his lips. "The mother of Arthur's choice has a claim upon me, which my heart can never fail to acknowledge."

"Most polite of your uncle, I'm sure," observed the dowager to Arthur, as they followed the rest up a winding-path towards the house. "But I was really too frightened to answer him. Why *does* he dress like that—like a pen-wiper at a fancy fair—all black? When I come to know him a little better, I shall certainly give him a hint or two about that."

"It is his fancy to wear velvet," said Arthur gravely, "and it is best not to interfere with it. As for the black, he is in mourning for his only son, though his death happened twenty years ago."

"Poor Mr. Maggot!"

"Not Maggot—Magus. He is very particular about his name, which he would not exchange for that of Guelph or Hapsburg."

"Why *should* he?" answered the old lady. "Of course nobody likes to be called out of their names, only, it's unfortunate he should have such a funny one. Does he always live here?"

"Always; and I hope will continue to do so."

"Rent free, I daresay? Now, that's just like you, Arthur."

"Hush! pray. We are all very fond of him, and it must never be supposed that he is under any obligation. I need not ask you to be kind to him; but if you ever feel inclined to smile at his eccentricities, pray, for my sake, forbear to do so—that is, of course, in his presence."

"Lor, you needn't be afraid of that. I'm frightened to death of him. The idea of his kissing my glove! It's a mercy I had my four-and-nines, or the colour would have come out for certain.—Well, you *'ave* got a fine 'ouse—house, I mean—that's my 'uskiness again, through the situation being a little damp, I daresay, so near

the river. You may build a couple of towers on to any place, and call it a Castle; or stick a few pillars in front of it, and call it a Belvideary; but this is something like a 'All."

CHAPTER X.

IN PAIRS.

SWANSDALE HALL, as has been hinted, was well worthy of Mrs. Somers' eulogium. While in reality of considerable extent, the straggling character of its architecture, which was of various periods, made it appear to occupy even a greater space than it did. The main entrance was at the side, and opened into a huge stone court, which again gave access to another court, inclosing a bowling-green (now perverted to croquet), commanded by the windows of the principal chamber, and with a terrace and stone steps

fronting the river. How many a time had fair dames in hoops and patches swept that sward, or sat upon the velvet banks to watch their lords at play! How many stately minuets had been danced there in the summer eves, by long-trained misses and high-heeled beaux! How often, between those thick box-tree walls, proof against prying eyes, had the tale that never palls been whispered to powdered nymphs by ruffled swains! The cedar on the lawn had seen them, sheltered them; and from its mournful boughs, as the wind of evening stirred them, one heard a sigh, as though in memory of those scenes of old-world elegance and elaborate ease. As little, however, did the present tenants of Swansdale Hall speculate upon the generations before them, as had those done upon what manner of men should succeed *them*. Each had his own views, expectations, hopes; and some their cares. At dinner-time, however, you would not easily have lit upon a merrier company. The host drank

to all his guests in turn, and seemed in the highest spirits; and each one did his best towards the general entertainment; if they did not always succeed in this benevolent object, it was not their fault. After dinner, they strolled about the garden—which the moon showed as brightly as in the day—in pairs. Let us play the eavesdropper on their talk.

"What on earth made Arthur bring that man down here?" asked Blanche of Adair.

"Which man?"

"Why, Mr. Paul Jones, of course."

"I don't think he is at all worse than the other."

"Mr. Allardyce? Well, he is at least a gentleman."

"'At least,' you say. I fear the thing is not so common, Miss Tyndall, as your remark would suggest. Moreover, Allardyce is not a gentleman. Is it possible that, because he has a handle to his name, Miss Blanche Tyndall takes the fact for granted?"

"I am not going to be led into an argument only to be beaten by your trained wits, Mr. Adair. I know you have always your lance in rest against people of quality."

"Why don't you say I run a muck against birth and riches, because I myself have neither to boast of?" said Adair with bitterness.

"Because that would be untrue. Your nature is too no—too just for that. Birth and riches are, everybody allows, an accident——"

"And poverty an offence," interrupted Jack, with a little sigh.

"With very vulgar people, like Mr. Paul Jones, it may be so. I have got back to him, you see, notwithstanding your adroit endeavours to lure me from the point. Why did Arthur ask him here?"

"You had better ask your cousin himself."

"That means, you will not tell me."

"It means, that I have no right to do so. One often wishes to tell things when one has no right."

"Other people's secrets?"

"Sometimes one's own."

He had stopped mechanically, and there was a silence, save for the beat of their hearts. At that moment, footsteps drew near upon the gravel — those of Mrs. Somers and Mrs. Tyndall.

"Why, bless me," whispered the former with vivacity, "I do believe we are coming upon the lovers! My glasses are behind my neck somewhere, but it's Arthur and Helen, is it not?"

"Certainly not," answered Mrs. Tyndall gravely. "That's my Blanche: your daughter is much taller than she."

"Is there anything between the young people?" Materially, there was not; they were very close together indeed; Blanche with her eyes fixed on the ground, Adair with his eyes fixed on hers.

"Nothing. They are very old friends, that is all."

In the strictest confidence between herself and the box-tree wall, Mrs. Somers

winked a wink of sagacious incredulity, but all she said was : " O indeed !"

" What a lovely night !" exclaimed Mrs. Tyndall, cheerfully, addressing the clandestine pair.

" Is it *not*, mamma ? We were just enjoying the calm and silence."

A burst of boisterous laughter broke from the terrace above their heads.

" Mr. Paul Jones enjoys it too—after his fashion," said Jack dryly.

" He's a very noisy man," observed Mrs. Somers.

" He's an odiously vulgar little man, that's what *I* call him," said Blanche impetuously.

" We will rather say, he lets his spirits get the better of him," remarked her mother reprovingly.

" Indeed, mamma, I think it is Arthur's spirits that have got the better of him," said Blanche.

" Hush, hush ! he is your cousin's guest, remember."

"That is just what Mr. Adair and I were talking of when you came up," said Blanche. "How *could* he have asked him? Did you ever see a man behave so at a dinner-table? —proposing toasts and wanting to sing songs. When he pronounced that opinion upon the hero of my uncle's story, Lord Camelford—'Well, I think his Lordship was stark staring mad'—I really thought Uncle Magus would have put him out of window."

"He *would*, if there had been any height to drop him from," said Adair, laughing.

"No, Mr. Adair; Uncle Magus would never have done anything unseemly at Arthur's table," said Mrs. Tyndall. "But, hush! here *is* your uncle."

Upon the walk beneath them could be seen two gigantic shadows, projected from the forms of Uncle Magus and the rector, advancing very slowly. The former, with a finger of one hand laid on the palm of the other, was arguing some question with great earnestness.

"You are wrong, my dear sir; quite wrong. Of course, it is distressing to a clergyman to hear of any gentleman being cut off by a pistol-shot, particularly if he leaves a large family unprovided for; but that loss is a trifle compared with the benefit resulting to society from the practice of the duello. What does Mandeville say?—'Man is civilised by nothing so irresistibly as by fear.' And again: 'Is it not strange that a nation should grudge to see perhaps half-a-dozen men sacrificed in a twelvemonth, to obtain such an invaluable blessing as politeness of manners!'"

"Nay; if you come to quote authorities," returned the rector, smiling, "hear Benjamin Franklin. He has a story, with a rider to it, which I think I can remember in his very words. A gentleman in a coffee-room desired another to sit further from him. 'Why so?' 'Because, sir, you smell.' 'That, sir, is an affront; and you must fight me.' 'I will fight you, if you insist upon it; but I don't see how that

will mend the matter. For if you will kill me, *I* shall smell too; and if I kill you, you will smell, if possible, worse than you do at present.' Upon which the philosopher has this reflection: 'How can such miserable worms as we are entertain so much pride as to conceive that every offence against our imagined honour merits death.'"

"Benjamin Franklin, sir," rejoined Uncle Magus, "may, for all I know, have been a philosopher, and I will take his own word for it that he was a miserable worm; but it is plain he was not a gentleman."

"Well, I am sure you will not say that of Dr. Paley," contended the rector; "and yet his views are quite as decided as Franklin's on this subject. 'Duelling, as a punishment,' he says, 'is absurd, because it is an equal chance whether the punishment falls on the offender or the person offended; nor is it much better as a reparation, it being difficult to explain in what the satisfaction consists'——"

"Difficult to explain, perhaps," broke in

the other, "but not to feel—that is, in the case of a man of honour. And as to the duello being an equal chance, that depends upon how a gentleman may choose to neglect his opportunities of improving himself. If you will one day do me the honour of listening to some manuscript notes which I have written upon this important subject, wherein everything is dealt with, from the *cartel*, or note of defiance, down to the minutest conduct at the *releager*, or place of meeting——"

"There are ladies on the box-tree walk," interrupted the rector hastily; "and if they have overheard us, they must think our subject a very bloodthirsty one."

"Not at all," answered Uncle Magus, sinking his voice; "that's a vulgar error, which I have exploded in my Chapter on Chances. I remember a friend once sending for me, whom I found pacing his room in the most violent state of agitation. 'I am going out,' he said; 'there, look at that letter on the table. I have accepted a

challenge, and want your pistols.' [The poor fellow had not even pistols of his own.] 'O my poor wife! and that cursed Equitable won't pay a rap of my insurance!' 'Pshaw! pshaw!' said I. 'Compose yourself and listen to me. You are going out, true; but that is no reason you should be shot. Only one man out of fourteen' [in reality, out of thirteen and a half; but I gave him the half in, to encourage him] 'receives the *coup de cœur*.' 'What's that?' says he. He was lamentably ignorant of an accomplishment that every gentleman should acquaint himself with, and a nervous subject besides. However, in the end I composed him; and the event justified my calculations, for he was only winged. Yes, sir; the effects of the duel are much exaggerated. I have known many men to have had bullets through their lungs and their spleen; and one who, though shot twice through the head, and deprived of most of his teeth, and half his jaw, still enjoys excellent health."

"His digestion must have been naturally very good," observed Mr. Glyddon, smiling; "even better than Arthur's proved to be in the shipwreck, about which Mr. Jones was laughing at dinner. Not a good-mannered man, by-the-by, I must say, that Mr. Jones."

"Good-mannered? In my time, sir, a man with such manners would be impossible. I have had a man out before now for less than that; but there, I can bear anything for Arthur's sake."

"I did not notice that Mr. Jones committed any rudeness to yourself."

"Rudeness? No, sir; it was a point-blank insult. I was telling a story of my friend the late Lord Camelford, a man of the nicest and most scrupulous sense of honour. It was this. An acquaintance dining at his Lordship's house in town, gave him some cause for offence, which demanded satisfaction, but mindful of his position as host, he restrained his feelings; when his friends departed, however, he

offered the offender a seat in his own carriage—took him 'off the stones' to Acton Green—and then produced a pair of pistols. 'You insulted me at dinner,' said he, 'and I could not resent it; but now you are my guest no longer.' Then shot him in the leg at fourteen paces. Many men, in Camelford's position, would have given him the *coup de cœur:* but he was magnanimity itself. Yet this Mr. Paul Jones expressed his opinion that his Lordship—whose memory I revere — was a stark staring madman."

"I think he hardly knew what he said," observed the rector; "else he would never have asked for whisky-and-water after dinner."

"I am not so sure of that point," rejoined the other doubtfully: "though I do not affect spirits myself, I have known men of honour in Ireland to indulge in them. I am sorry to see Arthur, however, has a friend such as this Jones."

"One who has lived a roving life, like

Tyndall, must needs pick up some strange acquaintances, and I daresay this man has his good points. Arthur has, at all events, chosen a most beautiful bride."

"A good-looking young lady, no doubt: I have not a word to say against her. Though, if you ask me, Mr. Glyddon, if she is such a bride as his mother would have chosen for him, I must needs say 'No.'"

"I trust she has not incurred your displeasure?"

"Certainly not—so far as she is personally concerned. It would be very difficult for any young lady to do so, I hope; while in her case, I have even to acknowledge an evident desire to please a forlorn old man, whose only claim on her is that he is her lover's kinsman. But I hear to-night for the first time, from Mr. Wynn Allardyce,"—the old man looked cautiously about him, and sunk his voice—"that the Somers family are connected with trade. I had taken it for granted

that they were the Somerses of Lincolnshire——"

"May I ask," interrupted the rector, "what caused this Mr. Allardyce to make you acquainted with that fact?"

"It was no officiousness on his part, I am bound to say, sir. He was so good as to prevent my completing a rather sweeping expression of opinion respecting the commercial community by a whispered mention of the fact. Miss Somers may possess, and doubtless does so, all the virtues of her sex; but Arthur is marrying beneath him; and you know as well as I what must needs come of *that*."

The rector was silent. Was it the effect of the moonlight, or had his fresh complexion on a sudden become pale?

"You are surely not in favour of unequal marriages, Mr. Glyddon? I mean among the laity, for I know your views respecting the celibacy of the clergy, and though I do not agree with them—for I am no papist—forgive me; that was a rudeness: I meant

to say I respect those views in you, though not in others. Well, if you were to marry, I say you would not choose the miller's daughter, nor the sexton's. And yet that is just what Arthur has done in his parish —which is the World—he has chosen a hop merchant's, in other words, I suppose, a brewer's daughter. Now, the Magus blood, sir, is not a thing to mix with yeast."

"There is a sight yonder which seems to shame the artificial distinctions to which you attach such weight," said the rector, smiling. He pointed to the river, up which a skiff was being slowly oared. The oarsman was leaning forward, and scarcely moved the sculls, the silvery splash of which could just be heard. The steerer, attired in white muslin, was leaning forward also, as though in whispered converse with him. It was Arthur and Helen. She had expressed a wish to go on the river by moonlight, to which he had, of course, acceded. If she had reflected a little, it might have occurred to her that the neces-

sity of the case would keep them considerably more distant from one another in a boat than there was any occasion for when walking in the grounds; but young women are too often the creatures of impulse. On the other hand, it is true, they seemed more alone together, more cut off from the unsympathising world, when on the silent river, and were certainly less liable, perhaps at some tender crisis, to interruption from their fellow-creatures.

"You are sure it won't tire you, Arthur, to row just a little way?"

"Not thirty miles, Helen, in your company."

"Nor bore you?"

She knew (or flattered herself she knew) that it would not do that, but she wished to hear him say so.

"There is nothing I should enjoy more. Is the seat quite comfortable? Would you like to steer, or shall I take off the rudder?"

"Oh, I should like to steer, of all things."

"But, my dear Helen, you are steering up stream."

"Why not, dear? I want to see the lock by moonlight; I thought it so very pretty this afternoon."

"Well, just as you please, dear; but though, as I said, it would not tire me, I must confess I should prefer down-stream to up." He rested on his oars, so that the boat began to drift down of itself.

"Why, you silly darling," laughed Helen, "what can it signify which way we start, since we shall have to come back again?"

"To be sure; I forgot that," said he. "What a droll idea!" He was so merry over his stupidity, that he could not pull a stroke for laughter, and the boat drifted down the stream still more.

What he was saying to himself all the time was: "I will not go to the lock. What would Jenny think if I took Helen there on the first evening of my return?"

"But you are going down-stream, Arthur, all this time."

"Yes, I mean to do so," was Arthur's

reflection. "Nothing—*nothing* shall induce me to go to the lock." What he *said* was: "My dear Helen, a thousand pardons, but I am as weak as a cat with laughing. Do wipe my eyes for me with that lovely handkerchief.—Thanks, dear, thanks. We will drop down-stream first, and then row up again to the lock. It's just the same thing, as you were saying; and since we have got so far, it is scarcely worth while to turn!"

Helen was not quite pleased at this. She liked to have her own way, and especially with her slave. She was silent, which is not a good sign in any woman. But she could not keep her eyes from Arthur, and he was grand to look upon; plying the oars with such strength and skill (for he had recovered himself now) that the boat seemed to fly through the stream, and smiling on her, notwithstanding her pouted lips, with persevering good-humour. She could well imagine how he had been the life and soul of that unhappy shipwrecked company, and then she thought of the sick boy he had

saved from death, and her heart melted within her.

"By-the-by," said Arthur presently, "I forgot to ask my darling what she thinks of Uncle Magus?"

"I think he's a *dear* old man," answered Helen eagerly. "I am sure the kindness of his manner towards myself and mamma —notwithstanding his grave and stately ways—could not be exceeded."

"I am so glad you like him, Helen, because, so long as he lives, I should wish him to always occupy the cottage. I owe him a debt of gratitude for his conduct towards me as a boy, not only in teaching me all boyish arts—to ride, to shoot, to swim —but as a peacemaker between myself and my poor father. He has no other kinsman, nor any one to care for him, but myself."

"One other *now*," said Helen softly. "After what you have said, I am sure Uncle Magus will be always welcome in any house of mine."

"Thanks, dear, thanks. The old man was once very different from what you see him now; he has mixed with the gayest and the highest, but they have all forgotten him—that is, the few he has not outlived. 'A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,' Blanche calls him."

"What a shame to call him a pagan!" said Helen, unconscious of the quotation. "I noticed he stood up when Mr. Glyddon said grace at dinner, and looked more devout than anybody."

"Nay, she didn't mean it in a bad sense; but that he lives in the past, and loves old-world customs and opinions. His family was the oldest in Ireland, for all I know, in the world; and through centuries of hopeless ruin, the head of his race has always hoarded the title-deeds of his confiscated estates, and attached to them the same value as though they gave him the lordship of a province. He hoards them still in yonder cottage; but there is none to whom to transmit them.

His only son died of want—of sheer starvation."

"O Arthur, how shocking!"

"Yes, and the more so, since, but for ancestral pride, Uncle Magus might have saved him. But he would not stoop to ask for help of any man. He himself was rescued by my father with difficulty, and almost by force, from the same horrible fate. His pistols, the last relics of his palmy time, were lying by his side; and in the same room was the dead body of his son—the last of his proud line—which he had embalmed by some process learned during his travels in the East."

"How terrible! But would he not part with his pistols to get bread for his son?"

"We must not say that, Helen. He did not know the boy was so near his end, or, rather, the brave young fellow concealed the necessity of his condition, to spare his father pain. Imagine such abject poverty befalling the lineal descendant of Magus

of the Hills! But there, I daresay you never heard of him: he is the man, however, of whom (as of Wray of Ards) the tale is told that he left his castle and lived at an inn for weeks, because he saw his daughter washing some egg-shell china with her own hands. The china is lost to Uncle Magus, but the pride remains."

"And *you*, too, have some of this ancient blood in your veins," murmured Helen admiringly. The herb valerian was at work with her; for, next to a title, the fact of tenacity of existence in any particular family excites the female breast to enthusiasm. Yet the lowest type of creature clings to life though you cut it in pieces, and begets its tens of thousands, while a Shakspeare leaves no heirs. "O Arthur, how *could* you think of marrying *me?*"

"Well, my darling, there were very many reasons," answered Arthur, with mock gravity. "If you will look in the water, for instance, you will see one. I

couldn't help thinking of it, directly I set eyes on you."

"Are you sure of that—*quite* sure, dear?" answered she earnestly. "I have sometimes thought—just now and then—that it was not so. In spite of myself, a feeling has crept over me—though I never thought to tell you of it—that I was not always, as I hope and believe I am now, first and foremost with you. It seemed to me—I don't know what moves me to confess it, except that I do not wish to have a secret from you—that some other image occupied your heart when I first knew you, and that that had to fade and fade, before it could receive mine. It *has* faded—has it not, darling?—altogether, *now?*"

She leaned forward, beseechingly, imploringly, and laid her hand upon his knee.

"It was a mirage," said Arthur, smiling faintly: "there was no real image, till I saw *you*." There was a pause; she looked

at him doubtfully; and he added: "I don't wish you to imagine that my heart waited for you, prescient of your coming. For how *could* that be, darling? You are too sensible to believe it. Men are not like women, pure and patient, content to wait for their ideal. If any man of my age tells one like you—whom he has known but a few months—that he never thought of love before he saw her, he lies! I hope I do not shock you: I trust I have not been mistaken in my estimate of your good sense and knowledge of the world: if I have, remember, Helen, you put me to the question."

"Yes, I suppose it must be so," sighed Helen, drawing her finger through the water, and looking down at it. "So you did love another, did you, Arthur, before me?"

"Several!" (She started.) "Lots!"

"O Arthur!" cried she, bursting into tears.

"Pooh, pooh! my dear: they were but

"'The summer pilots of an empty heart
Unto the shore of—nothing.'

Or if one of them—or some of them—was something more, they were not to me as you are: that I swear. We never exchanged vows of unalterable attachment; never swore to be faithful to one another; never—— But why should I say more: you do not doubt me, Helen?"

"No, dearest." She held out her little hand for him to kiss, and smiled divinely. "Your lips are cold, Arthur; I am afraid you are taking cold. Let us turn back, and go home."

"It is cold work doing penance, in one's shirt-sleeves," returned Arthur, smiling; "but one feels all the better for it. I am shriven and forgiven, am I not?"

"O yes, indeed. I never, never was so happy!"

So they rowed back to land, whispering soft nothings, and not a word did Helen say of wishing to row up-stream to see the

lock; but Arthur's heart was heavy within him and smote him sore.

Beside the croquet-ground, above terrace, and garden, and river, sat yet another pair.

"Why can't you talk to a fellow, Allardyce?" said one peevishly, after a long silence, during which they puffed at their cigars.

"Because," replied the other, "one can say nothing at which you don't burst out laughing like a hyena. You're drunk, sir; and it is not pleasant to be the keeper of a drunken man. But for me, you would have gone down amongst those people yonder and done for us both. Our invitation here was not so pressing that you can afford to make a beast of yourself. It would serve you right if Tyndall kicked you out neck and crop."

"He won't do that," said Mr. Paul Jones cunningly. "When a man has got the thumbscrews on, he is very careful how he moves. With one turn, I could smash his bones."

"Not yet, my friend: don't think it. You would bruise him a little, that is all. It needs another turn or two."

"Which we will give it."

"We intend to do so; but in the meantime, you must endeavour to imitate a gentleman. I tell you again that you are making our position here precarious by your pot-house manners."

"Precarious! Come, I like that, when I saw you making love to Miss Helen on the barge under Tyndall's very eyes! Yes, yes; you may be as angry as you please; but I am not going to have all my plans thrown over, because you choose to indulge your fancies."

"Pooh, pooh! You are talking of what you don't understand," answered Allardyce contemptuously. "So long as you get your money—I mean other people's money—you are content; but for my part, it is also necessary that I amuse myself. It would be dangerous in your case to do so (if it were not absurd), I grant; but it is

not so in mine. You are a master of *finesse* at whist; but in other matters, my dear Paul, you are crass, gross, of the earth, earthy, and incapable as a lock-gate of a delicate movement."

"Indeed! Yet which of us was it that procured us the invitation to Swansdale?"

"You mean, extorted a permission to present ourselves here. Well, I allow that that is owing to you, and give you full credit for your audacity. It was a bold stroke to write to a man who owed you money, to tell him that if he did not ask yourself and friend to visit him under his own roof, you would send the sheriff's officer there instead!"

"I did nothing of the kind. I wrote a most polite letter; you shall see it some day—quite a remarkable combination of friendship and—well, firmness; and while hinting at the little account between us, pleasantly suggested that the result of our meeting here would be as likely as not to wipe it out, or even to *leave a balance on*

the other side. Think of that, sir—wasn't it a fine touch ?"

"I say again it was audacious: *l'audace, l'audace et toujours l'audace,* should be your motto when you come to have one. 'There are four things,' says Solomon, 'which say not It is enough;' but he would have written, 'There are *five* things,' if he had been acquainted with a gambler who is unlucky. Tyndall's ill luck is not likely to change, I'm afraid.—Hush! there you are with your hyena laugh again."

"I can't help it. His ill luck likely to change! Well, that *is* a good one. O dear, O dear!"

"I hope the things from Darwin's have arrived," said Allardyce gravely.

"I've seen 'em, my dear fellow. There's a great packet, with *From Darwin's* painted on it, lying in the corner of the smoking-room. That's what put me in such high feather at dinner-time. What a pity Swansdale is entailed; it would be

rather a nice place to come down to for the summer months, and to have printed on one's cards: *Paul Jones, Esquire, the Albany and Swansdale Hall.*"

"And what's to be printed on *my* cards?" asked Allardyce with sudden ferocity.

"Whatever you please, my dear fellow. We go share and share alike to the last penny, trust me for that."

"We shall certainly go share and share alike," was the dry reply; "as for trusting you—well, yes, I trust you, for you know that if you played me false, Paul, I'd kill you like a dog.—See, there's the boat come back again with Tyndall and his young woman. Well, I suppose he'll have had enough of spooning by this time, and be ready for business. In my opinion, he should be bled freely without delay or stint: he's just the sort of fool to be sweet upon his wife and nose-led; and it is just possible that after marriage there may be——"

"A son and heir," interrupted Paul. "Yes, he may become careful for his son's sake."

"Not he. A gambler is never restrained by a far-off contingency. But when he is married, it is possible there may be—what it is now so fashionable to dispense with on such occasions—No Cards."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LUCK.

THE goddess Fortune is the only one of the heathen divinities who has survived the disaster of her fellow-gods, and has still her worshippers amongst us; and yet how little are her nature and requirements understood! We would all please her if we could, but not one of us is certain of the road to her favour. Curiously enough, it is among the most irreligious persons that her rites — ceremonials and observances that are supposed to please her—are most carefully paid. The man who believes in

nothing else, believes in Luck ; and endeavours to propitiate her with devices at whose childishness the African adorers of Mumbo Jumbo might laugh. I have seen a minister of state turn his chair round at a whist-table, in order to avert her displeasure ; I have seen a warrior, to whom the safety of an army has been confided, and not in vain, lodge an ivory fish upon the candlestick, to secure her good graces ; I have seen the most prudent of attorneys call for fresh cards—and pay for them—in the full confidence that she would be gratified by that extravagant proceeding ; I have known a venerable divine to lay his finger with indecent haste upon the two of clubs—because "whoever first touches the two of clubs" (as he was good enough to explain to me) "secures a good hand for himself" —directly after the hands were dealt. To scoff at such ritualistic observances is to excite in these idolators an indignation not unmingled with satisfaction—precisely such a feeling, in fact, as is induced in certain

religious persons when they hear the railing infidel. "It's very shocking; but he'll suffer for it—that's some comfort." And the idolators are at least logical in their reflection; for when one man suffers at cards others reap the benefit. To do Arthur Tyndall justice, he committed no impiety of this sort; on the contrary, he was observant of every ceremony likely to propitiate the goddess Fortune, and yet, whenever he had played against Messrs. Jones and Allardyce, he had suffered loss. "Under one's own roof," however, it has been said by one of the priesthood of this cult, "luck changes;" and it was with the cheerful expectation that this would happen, that after Uncle Magus and the rector had departed from the smoking-room at Swansdale, about midnight, the host sat down at the card-table to play loo with his usual antagonists. Adair did not play, but looked on, gravely enough, smoking his pipe and watching the winners; from them he never withdrew his eyes—save once when Tyndall exclaimed:

"Curse the luck! I'll have new cards,"—until the luck became unbearable, and the host rose, and declined to have any more of it. No money had changed hands, but the transactions on paper had been considerable.

"Well, you *have* been deuced unlucky, and that's the fact," said Mr. Paul Jones, condolingly. "In his own house, too; it's really too bad. Ain't it, Allardyce?"

"It's hard lines," returned that gentleman, with a yawn; "but luck will run so sometimes. As for me, I have won all this pot of money almost without knowing it; for I've been as much asleep as awake. That travelling on the river makes one so confoundedly sleepy! I could scarcely see the cards."

"Oh, don't go to bed yet," pleaded Mr. Paul Jones; "let's have one more cigar first."

"I shall not prevent your smoking any number of cigars, my pretty Poll—and especially of Tyndall's cigars—but as for

me, I am off to my virtuous couch, to sleep the sleep of the just." And he lit his bedroom candle. On seeing this, Mr. Paul Jones reluctantly did the same.

"I will see you to your rooms, gentlemen," said Tyndall, rousing himself with an effort from the consideration of his losses; but they both begged him not to do so. They knew their way, and he had a cigar to finish.

"You should have stopped," whispered Jones to Allardyce, as they trod softly along the well-carpeted passage together, "and not have left Tyndall alone with that fellow: he has been watching us all night as a cat watches a mouse."

"I know it," answered the other; "and it's quite as well that we have altered our little game. The more he watches us now, however, the better. By-the-by, you know the exact number, I suppose, that——"

"Hush! Yes; forty-eight."

"I'll make a note of it, however; for if but one remains, like that story of the cock

and the pomegranate seeds in the *Arabian Nights*——"

"Here's your pocket-book, Allardyce, if that's what you're looking for," said a quiet voice: "you left it on the whist-table!"

"Thanks, Adair, thanks," said Allardyce, taking from his hand the article in question, and dropping it in his pocket.

"How imprudent you are!" exclaimed Mr. Paul Jones, peevishly, when the baize door of the smoking-room had swung noiselessly upon Adair's retreating figure, and the two friends were once more alone together.

"Why so, man? You don't suppose I'm fool enough to write anything compromising in a pocket-book?"

"I don't mean that; but you were talking so loud when he came up with us."

"He is welcome to all I talked about."

"Well, as it happened, I believe he may be," said Mr. Jones, reflectively. "But, depend upon it, he listened all he could.

If there is one character more contemptible than another it's an eavesdropper."

"Very true. But here is my room; and if you have no other jewel in the way of a sentiment to drop in my ear, I will now wish you good night."

"Good night!" Mr. Jones walked on, shaking his venerable head, on which the bump of "caution" was unnaturally prominent, and only slightly counteracted by that of a tendency to strong liquor—"good night, and don't talk in your sleep.—— Curse that eavesdropping fellow Adair! How I wish I knew what those two are talking about in the smoking-room!"

Let us, reader, enjoy the opportunity for which Mr. Paul Jones sighed in vain.

"Did you ever see such infernal and unvarying ill-luck as mine, Jack?" inquired Tyndall, with that strange desire for condolence in loss which characterises most gamblers, no matter how independent of sympathy they may be in other matters.

"Very often," replied Adair, coolly. "Always, in fact, when I have seen you play against Jones and Allardyce."

"Oh, that's all nonsense, my dear fellow. They are as straight as a die, so far as that goes; I'll lay my life on that."

"If you go on playing with them, it is my belief, Tyndall, that you will soon have nothing else to lay."

"Stuff and nonsense! The luck must turn some day. One would really think the cards were bewitched." His eye turned towards the table, whereon they still lay in disorder, and lit upon the pocket-book. "That's Allardyce's. Just run after him, will you, Jack, since you've done your pipe, and I don't want the smoke to get all over the house.—Thanks." Then, when he had come back: "There were some rather heavy items against my name in that confounded book, Jack."

"I have no doubt of it," said Jack. "I suppose twenty-five pounds would not be much when set against your account this

evening; but there they are." And he laid down the notes upon the table.

"My dear Adair," exclaimed Tyndall, in an offended tone, "what are you thinking about? I never borrow of a friend, you know."

"I know that, though I do not agree with your ideas upon the subject, especially since you borrow of these men, or, at least, are content to owe them money, which is the same thing."

"Really, Adair, you must permit me to remark that that is *my business*, and not yours."

"Just so, my dear fellow," returned Jack cheerfully; "exactly as this is *your* money, and not mine. You lost it to me, it is true, but you did not lose it fairly, for I was perfectly certain that the event against which you betted was about to come off. Allardyce offered to take your ten to one, if you remember, that Jones mounted the barge-horse and rode back—"

"Well, it *was* ten to one against his

doing it," interrupted Arthur. "Nothing but my infernal luck could have put it into his head to ride a horse."

"I beg your pardon; it was Allardyce himself that put it into his head. I heard him whisper to Jones as he started: 'Ride him home.' That was why Allardyce offered you the wager; that was why I took less odds, and spoiled his market; that is why I now say, Those five fivers are yours!"

"My dear Jack, I know you believe every word you speak," said Tyndall gravely, "and I know that you mean nothing but good to your friends. But I don't know any man whose judgment is more blinded by prejudice. Granted that Allardyce said: 'Ride him home.' Well, that might be only chaff, or (more likely) a sneer; and even if he meant it, what guarantee could he have had, on the instant, that Jones would have done his bidding? Pray, take up your money; and don't let us talk upon a matter on which

we shall never agree—namely, the merits of Jones and Allardyce. I don't think them perfection; but as to any charge of dishonesty, it is an insult to my understanding and to myself to bring such against any man with whom I am in the habit of associating."

"All right, old fellow," said Adair, good-humouredly, putting the notes back in his pocket, and filling his pipe.—"How beautiful Miss Helen looked to-night!"

"Yes, indeed, did she not? I do believe she's very fond of me, Jack."

"I never doubted *that*," returned Adair quietly.

Tyndall coloured, and puffed vigorously at his cigar—a sure sign with him that he was ill at ease.

"You see, I'm not a soft fellow, Jack, like you, with women. I may have been so once"—Jack nodded assent: "You *were*," said he parenthetically—"but I've knocked about too much in the world for that now. You don't know what I've

done and gone through. They say human nature is the same all the world over; but that's not true. It's worse, far worse, where I've been, than here at home."

"It must be deuced bad then," said Jack with confidence, and glancing involuntarily towards the card-table.

"I wish I had something better to give Helen in exchange for her devotion to myself than what is left to me of a heart; that's what I mean, Jack. My life, since I came to manhood, has been a mistake. I should never have disagreed with the poor old governor, nor have left Swansdale."

"Ah!" returned the other drily, "but you might have stayed at Swansdale, and yet have downright quarrelled with him."

"That's true." He sunk his voice as he added: "I saw her to-day, Jack, at the lock, and spoke with her."

"I know it," said Jack curtly.

"How could I help it?" pleaded Tyndall. "'What! haven't you a word to say to your old friend, Jenny?' said old Jacob;

and I was obliged to go. When I saw her standing at the cottage-door looking straight at me with her great reproachful eyes, and fifty times more beautiful than ever, I said to myself: 'Arthur Tyndall, you're a liar and a coward.'"

"You should have thought of what you would say to yourself when you saw her, months ago."

"I did, Jack; but where was the use? It was the fear of that very thing which kept me from coming down here, or from asking a word about her. If the old man had only kept away for good, and not brought her back again here, close to my very door! Helen wished me to row her up to the lock this very evening: think of *that!*" Tyndall rose, and paced the room with hasty strides. "O Jack, if I had only had the pluck, when I first came home, to run down here at once, and—redeemed my word, instead of staying up in town until I could not redeem it."

"Why?" inquired Adair.

"Why?" reiterated the other impatiently. "Why, because I had not the money. Three 'thou' in hard cash have I paid to Paul Jones already, and I owe him as much again; and Allardyce has had his pickings also. Of course, I've been a fool; but who was to know that luck would run like that? Now, Helen's money—though, of course, I don't marry her for that—will set me straight, and keep my father's roof over my head, and Uncle Magus in his cottage; and I did hope that Jenny might have gone away, as I knew her father meant to do; but there—it's just like my luck."

"But does Jenny still think of *you*, Tyndall?" asked Adair gravely.

"Not she; she is too proud. She even refused to hear any explanations of my conduct. The time was past, she said, for that, and she should be ashamed of herself if she permitted me to give them."

"Well, that is as it should be," said Jack.

"I suppose it is," answered Tyndall ruefully. "I try to put Jenny out of my head altogether; a fellow can't do more than that, you know; and I'm sure I like Helen very much. It'll be all right when we're married, at all events; I'm quite sure of *that*."

"I hope so, indeed," answered Jack earnestly.

"Well, as I am about to be a Benedict so soon, it is only right that I should accustom myself to early hours," said Arthur smiling. "Good-night, old fellow, and when you have finished your last pipe, put the candles out."

"All right, Arthur. Good-night.—He's going to marry the wrong young woman," muttered Jack to himself as the door closed behind his friend. "I was afraid of that all along."

CHAPTER XII.

A NIGHT WITH THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

HOUGH it was now very late—and, indeed, the day was about to break—Adair made no sign of retiring to repose. He had one of those constitutions which—in youth, at all events—the want of sleep seems to affect but little ; and though by no means of dissipated habits himself—for he was a sportsman whenever he had the opportunity, and a hard worker, save when, as now, he chanced to take a holiday—he had been used to the small-hours. It is not at all unusual, in fast society, where play

is deep, and night is turned to day, to find some quiet athlete who sits in his arm-chair pulling at his pipe, and regarding the wild doings of his comrades with but a moderate amount of interest. He does not play; he does not bet; but, always "sitting out" in a state of philosophic calm, sometimes sees more of the game than those who join in it. And Jack Adair was one of these. Without any striking characteristics of his own, he had always been very popular among men; and though only a few of the opposite sex were able to appreciate his honest worth and independent simplicity (which most of them called "want of polish"), those who were able to do so admired him even more than did the men. At school he had been called "Gentleman Jack," and distinguished for an uprightness and sense of justice very uncommon among school-boys. At Oxford, though neither a reading-man nor possessed of marked ability, he had made himself more respected by the authorities of his college

than many a man who was a "credit" to them as a scholar; while among the undergraduates, whether as a "first-rate oar" or "an excellent bat," a "man without an ounce of humbug in his composition," or as "the best fellow in the world" (and quite impervious to the effects of liquor), he was adored. Jack never lost a friend, and thus it happened that, in after life, he was so often found in the society of men of widely different habits from his own, and even sometimes in that of those who, if you judged men by their companions, would have caused you to have entertained rather an indifferent opinion of even Jack himself. Arthur Tyndall had been his closest college friend, notwithstanding a great difference of character, or perhaps in consequence of it; for

> "This was rich where that was poor,
> And this supplied that's want the more,
> As his unlikeness fitted his."

Jack grieved for his friend's faults, but did not blink at them (and it was to Arthur's

credit that the other's plain speaking had never caused a rupture between them); while he appreciated his virtues (and they were many) to the full. "What could he do for him? How could he help him in his present fix?" was the thought that was agitating Jack's honest heart. The facts of the case, as they seemed to him, were, that Arthur was in love with two women at once; a position by no means impossible (with all due deference, ladies), nor perhaps even unusual, but very embarrassing, at least when it occurs in Europe. What made it more difficult to Jack, as a question of morals, was the loyal conviction he entertained that Arthur Tyndall, though impulsive, and even unstable, was incapable of a baseness, and must be considered, in the main, to be the victim of circumstances.

And Jack knew all the circumstances. In the old days, Arthur had kept nothing from him—not even his secret love for Jenny Wren. The girl had been but seventeen or eighteen at most then, and yet, as

Jack had thought, one of the most sensible as well as lovely girls he had ever spoken with; but then she was an innkeeper's daughter, and what folly it had been in his friend to enter so passionately on a pursuit which could never end in capture. As for anything dishonourable in the affair—from its having been confided to Jack, we may be sure there was nothing of that sort; and, to do Arthur justice, no such idea had entered into his thoughts. He meant to make Jenny Wren his wife—some day. Jenny had not concealed from him that she reciprocated his affection, but she looked at it with clearer eyes, and perceived its hopeless character. To obtain the elder Tyndall's consent to such a union was evidently out of the question; even Arthur did not attempt to do so, and the estrangement between himself and his father took place upon a wholly different matter—a money matter. On the eve of his departure for a distant land, he had had an interview with Jenny, in which she had exhibited immense

good sense and entire unselfishness. He would have bound himself to be hers for ever, but she would not permit it. "My heart is yours," said she, "whenever circumstances permit you to come and claim it, and if you still choose to do so——"

"If I still choose!" had been his indignant interruption. "Can you suppose absence or distance can affect love like mine?"

"You have never tried them, Arthur," had been her quiet rejoinder. "There is, at all events, no need of vows which bind only the unwilling; and if unwilling, I do not wish you to be bound."

Her prescient heart—if it were not mere self-sacrificing generosity that actuated her—had not misgiven her in vain. How idle are the saws that talk of absence and distance as only more endearing to one another those whom fate has parted! Does the memory of our dead, then, grow more lively and more poignant as the years revolve without them? In solitude, per-

haps, and when occupation is wanting to the mind, it may still feed itself with fond regrets; but in the busy world, and still more among scenes of novelty and excitement, the image of the beloved one fades and fails. So was it with Arthur Tyndall: nor must we think too harshly of him because of it. He was by no means incapable of noble and unselfish actions, as we have seen in his giving the sick sailor-lad that priceless boon; his nature was generous and affectionate; he was no "liar," as the pang of conscience had caused him to call himself; but he was unstable of purpose, and a gambler. He not only liked high stakes, which is a variable term, and means playing for such sums as are of importance to us, but gambling—that is, risking more than we can afford. He had anticipated the funds that would have been at his disposal on his father's death, and on its occurrence had come home, impoverished, yet not so poor but that with what was left to him he could have lived on at

Swansdale, and maintained Uncle Magus (a sacred trust with him) at the cottage as before, and in ignorance of his change of fortune. His marriage with Jenny might have been then effected; and if "the county" had refused its sanction to the *mésalliance*, so much the better, for it would have saved his purse-strings; but immediately on his arrival in town he had fallen in with certain old acquaintances, and some dangerous new ones, and the result had been such pecuniary loss as was almost ruin. Why had he not flown upon the wings of love, it may be asked, *at once* to Swansdale?—a question not to be answered to the satisfaction of the fair sex. That brief delay, however, had cost him dear. By his own act he had rendered that impossible, which, five years ago, he had looked forward to as the crowning happiness of his life. Then came Helen, as beautiful as her namesake of Troy, and with the power to re-establish his broken fortunes.

Such, in general terms, was the position

of Arthur Tyndall, as it appeared to his friend. Whether he had really sacrificed love for money, whether he still entertained for Jenny any great proportion of that affection with which he had once regarded her, and all of which was Helen's due, Jack could not tell for certain, but he feared that it was so. He took his friend's part as far as he could. Jenny might have been magnanimous in refusing to permit her would-be swain to plight his faith, or even to correspond with her through those long years of absence, but the result had been unfortunate. If there had not been great danger in such a course, there would have been no magnanimity; but there *had* been danger, risks, temptations, which had ended in necessities to which Tyndall had succumbed. It had been wrong in him, but by no means inexcusable. But what if Arthur, contrary perhaps to his own expectations, had not got off with this old love before he got on with the new? What if, coming down to Swansdale an engaged

man, he had suddenly found the sight of Jenny too much for him, awakening sweet memories of the past, and making the future hateful? Jack was not given to sentiment, but he was a man of scrupulous honour and sense of justice, and this apprehension filled him with pity, not so much for Arthur and Jenny, as for Helen. He did not take "the county" view of the affair at all; he knew that Arthur would have by no means "married beneath him" had he married Jenny, and indeed that the latter was a greatly superior young lady, in all respects worth consideration, to Helen herself; but it was about Helen that he was troubled most. She had given her love to Arthur, and was about to give her money. Suppose he should have nothing to give her in return, or even but a little! She was by no means one, if Jack judged her rightly, to be satisfied with half a heart, and still less if she should find out that the other half was in another woman's keeping. Yet his mind misgave him sorely that this would be the case.

It was true that Jenny had behaved with dignity and prudence in refusing to listen to Arthur's excuses for himself; but how long would she maintain that admirable attitude, if she really loved him? Jack was not a scholar, but he had studied in the school of human nature with some profit. He called to mind Arthur's studious reticence to him upon the subject of his first love, ever since his return to England, and even when announcing to him his engagement to Helen. It would have been surely natural to have alluded to Jenny *then*, if he could have honestly said: "I have got over that, old fellow, as that good wise girl herself always said I should do." How suspicious, too, had been his behaviour on board the barge; so nervous and *distrait* as they had approached the *Welcome*, so relieved when he had found her departed from it; or if that might have happened in any case, what but the very madness of the renewal of love could have prompted him at the lock cottage to offer

explanations of his conduct! The time, as she had said, was indeed long past for that, and silence would have become him far better. And yet what could Arthur Tyndall do in his crippled pecuniary state, and with that three "thou" of debt to Mr. Paul Jones hanging over his head? He could offer himself *as* "a hand" to old Jacob Renn, and assist him to open the lock gates, but he certainly could not offer his hand, with a deficit in it, to his daughter. What a position of —— Jack put gently aside the words "disgrace and dishonour" that suggested themselves to his mind, and substituted for them—"embarrassment!" What a hobble had poor Arthur brought himself into, and how was he to escape from it, if at all? Whether to cut away masts and rigging—throw over position and competence—or heave overboard the precious cargo of honour and good faith, and ride the storm out *that* way, was unfortunately not offered to him as a simple alternative. The question was far

more complicated; it included poor Uncle Magus's interests, which he was bound to protect, for one thing, besides Helen's, and Jenny's, and his own. Still, if the money were but forthcoming, the difficulty would not be so insurmountable. Arthur would then at least be free to choose.

How different, thought Jack, was the position of affairs to what it had been when he was at Swansdale last, five years ago and more. Arthur had his difficulties even then, but they were not discreditable ones; the road of his love did not run smooth, but it did not fork and run in two directions. This was the room they used to smoke in then; it had been Arthur's play-room from a boy, and there stood the book-case still, with its store of youthful literature, mixed with a few novels of a later time. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver*, the *Arabian Nights*—by-the-by, what had that scoundrel Allardyce said about the *Arabian Nights*, as he had come up with him and his confederate (Jack always called them the "confede-

rates") in the passage: "'If but one remains, like that story of the pomegranate seeds in the *Arabian Nights*'—— If one remains of *what*, I wonder? And what *is* the story?"

Jack took down the volume from the shelf, and finding no such title as the cock and the pomegranate seeds in the index, sat down to peruse it. The dawn was finding its way in through the shutters, and it reminded him that when a child he had once sat up till daybreak over this very book; but it was new to him now again. What a farrago of absurdities and improprieties it seemed to him as a man; how strange that it should be placed in the hands of children at all; and yet what an undeniable charm and interest hung about these princes and princesses, whose names were sneezes, and who lived, even by supposition, no nearer than at Samarcand or Bassoura. Some of the stories, such as "The Fisherman and the Genius," and "The History of the Husband and the

Parrot," were familiar to him through quotation, but for the most part he remembered nothing of them. Long-bearded, broad-shouldered Jack pulling gently at his twentieth pipe or so, had become a child again, listening to Scheherazadé with all the attention of her husband the sultan. When he arrived at the story of "The Second Calender," however, his attention was arrested by the following passage:

"The pomegranate immediately began to swell, and became as large as a gourd, which then rose up as high as the gallery, and rolled backwards and forwards three several times; it then fell down to the bottom of the court, and broke into many pieces. The wolf in the meantime, transformed itself into a cock, ran to the seeds of the pomegranate, and began swallowing them as fast as possible. When it could see no more, it came to us, with its wings extended, and making a great noise, as if to inquire of us whether there were any more seeds. There was one lying on the

border of the canal, which the cock in going back perceived, and ran towards it as quickly as possible; but at the very instant that its beak was upon it, the seed rolled into the canal, and changed into a fish."

"If but *one* remains, then," thought Jack, "of somethings or other, I know not what —I am quite sure he was not joking, from the earnestness of his tone—there will be danger to Messrs. Allardyce & Co. What he must needs have meant is, that that one would be as dangerous as though all were left. If I could but find that one, I would bless the *Arabian Nights* as long as I lived. What *can* that one thing be?" Jack's eyes lit upon the cards that had proved so fatal to his friend, and fixed themselves there. He had watched those men with the utmost care that night, but could see no signs of what he had more than suspected on previous occasions—namely, the existence of a secret telegraph—a silent code of signals—between them. He had no more

doubt that they were blacklegs—cheats—than of his own existence; but how did they accomplish their villany? It is easy for a fool that has lost his money to aver that he has been cheated, but it is only fools who sympathise with him, unless his assertion can be proved. The world, in its wicked wisdom, is slow to credit such charges; while, curiously enough, the man that is really cheated is often the last to believe it. The suggestion is humiliating to his *amour propre*. Tyndall had already shown himself credulously obstinate in the matter of the bet on the river, and he was not likely to be less so where much heavier stakes were involved. Jack had been not only vexed with his friend's infatuation, but hurt that his own evidence had been disregarded, and he was firmly resolved not to make another move until he could see his way to checkmate the enemy. "If but one remains." Well, if the metaphor of the pomegranate seeds were a correct one, there ought to be a great number of these

dangerous somethings. *Suppose the cards were marked*, and one of them found to be so, would not that be a case exactly applicable ?

The blood rushed to Jack's forehead ; in his excitement, this idea seemed almost a revelation. For now that he came to think of it, the winners had not made their gains at loo that night so much by the possession of good cards as by their singular good-fortune in taking "miss." If they took miss, it was sure to be a better hand than Tyndall's ; and if they did not take miss, and declined to play, it had always turned out, that if they had played, they would have lost by it. Now, all this would, of course, have happened had they known the cards before they were turned. He took up a pack—they were white-backed ones, with elaborate white spots upon them—and throwing back the shutter, examined them with eager care. They had been slightly soiled with use, but there was not a mark, nor sign, nor prick upon them. He felt

them over with delicate deliberation, but there was neither projection nor roughness, such as might have guided a dealer's hand. Where had they come from, those innocent-looking bits of cardboard, that had cost his friend so much? They had been taken—six packs of them—from a great brown-paper packet under the book-case. Jack turned it over, and examined it carefully: it looked all right enough, and had evidently come straight from the manufacturers; *From Darwin & Co., Card-makers,* was pasted outside it, side by side with the railway parcel-ticket. There were two-and-forty packs remaining; six had been taken out; so there had originally been four dozen—forty-eight. Why, was not that the very number mentioned by Paul Jones just before Allardyce began to speak? It had made no impression on him at the time, for the doors in Swansdale Hall had been all numbered as at an inn, through some strange fancy of the late Mr. Tyndall, and he had thought that Jones was merely re-

ferring to his own apartment; but now it recurred to him with quite a new significance. If it *was* the number of packs of cards to which Jones referred, then Allardyce's reply was pregnant with meaning indeed; and if it was not, the coincidence was extraordinary.

Adair returned to the table, and was about to take up a pack of cards, when a sudden idea struck him. "If I take one of these," thought he, "Messrs. Jones and Allardyce will be sure to miss it. They will not think of counting those in the parcel, and even if they do, they may come to the conclusion that the Messrs. Darwin may have sent one short." With that he put a new pack in his pocket, and was about to leave the room, when the book lying on the table attracted his attention. "I'll put that back again," he muttered: "if these scoundrels escape me, it shall not be through lack of prudence. There's not much in my idea, after all, I fear, for my eyes are sharp enough, and as yet they

have discovered nothing. Still, 'Patience and shuffle the cards,' is a good motto." The shelf was well filled, and the return of the *Arabian Nights* was opposed by another volume of this juvenile library, whose title thereby attracted his attention—*Mornings with the Microscope.* "By Jove," cried Jack, "that may be a great piece of luck. Since my unassisted eyes have failed to detect anything wrong, suppose I try a morning with a microscope!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE BRIDGE.

"SORROW may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," is a saw of great authority and acceptance, and yet we suspect that human experience, if appealed to generally, would reverse that saying. Surely it is at night, after some sort of meal, or drink, or even a pipe of tobacco, that our spirits fight against despondency, and we make the best of a "bad job," or, at all events, look forward to forgetting our troubles in sleep; whereas, on the other hand, when the blank day breaks, the full sense of our calamity is

borne in upon us, and, like Miss Bella Wilfer, we wish that we were dead. At all events, on the morrow of his return to his old home, Arthur Tyndall awoke far more dispirited and displeased with himself than he had yet been, and early as it was, arose and dressed himself. For to lie in one's bed in the broad daylight, to think and think of the ruin that we have brought upon ourselves, or on the wrong we have done to others, is of all things the most intolerable.

Within doors, no one was stirring, but without, the ancient gardener was already sweeping one of the gravel-walks, and bade his young master "good-morning" heartily.

"Foreign parts have not altered your ways of life, I see, Master Arthur," said he approvingly; "for you was always an early riser, like your poor father before ye."

Yes; he had been an early riser, and at Swansdale especially, for a certain reason, which the sight of Old Giles recalled to his mind with a sharp pain. Often and often had he come upon the old man, when, with

rod and basket, he had gone forth from the Hall at that very hour—not to fish, but to pretend to fish from the river-side path that led to the *Welcome*. It was not unlikely even that Giles knew that he had done so, for, though no one in the village was aware of how far matters once had gone between "Master Arthur" and "Jenny," there was a shrewd suspicion abroad that they were not indifferent to one another. How unchanged seemed every object that met his gaze since those palmy days of adolescence and first-love; unsettled and doubtful days, indeed, but days of promise! How gloriously the tall trees sparkled with dew! How freshly rose the incense from the flower-beds! In the winding shrubbery—"wilderness," it used to be called, but, to his travelled eyes, accustomed to the wild luxuriance of nature, it seemed garden like the rest—how joyously sang the birds! There was the little wicket-gate to which she had once been so rash as to accompany him on his way back, and where they had parted with a whispered

farewell: he had leaned upon it, and watched her trip homeward along the dewy fields, and when she turned and smiled (for he knew that she was smiling, since she had her face towards *him*), he had smiled too and kissed his hand. He leaned upon it now, and gazed upon the vacant fields with an aching heart.

But why had it not ached before, when absent from her? And why had it not yearned, on his return to England, to clasp her in his arms—as it did now? Why had his love smouldered so low that he had thought it cold and burnt out? And now, when it was too late, why, merely at the sight of her, had it flamed up anew, so fiercely that it threatened to consume him? Had he deceived himself, and loving her all along, persuaded himself—being tempted so to do by material advantage—that he no longer loved her? No! If he had come back yesterday, and found her, exactly as he had left her, "a simple maiden in her flower," he could have borne to look upon

her with remorseful eyes, perhaps, but with steadfast ones. He had made up his mind to do so. He had been bound by no promise to do otherwise; she herself had told him that what had happened was likely to happen; necessity (induced by his own act, but still necessity) had compelled him to the course he had taken. Of course, he had been inconsistent: woman is weak, illogical, and (very) contradictory, but there is no bound to the inconsistency of man. The most faithful forget their allegiance; the bravest become cowards. Picton himself was convicted of participation in an act which men of ordinary courage would die rather than have committed. Arthur, to do him justice, had given Jenny credit for the same readiness to forget and to forgive—to forget *him*, that is, and to forgive *herself*—as he had manifested towards her; or if that should not have been the case—if even she should still entertain some tenderness for him—she was such a very sensible girl (this was how the poor wretch had argued),

that so soon as she heard of his engagement to another, she would at once dismiss him from her heart—as a traitor, perhaps; yet if so, so much the better for her. But what if she thought him a traitor, and still had not dismissed him from her heart!

Her air had been grave and cold; she had refused to hear what he would have said for himself: she had treated the idea of their meeting at the old trysting-place—though only to hear his excuses—with indignation and disdain; but he could not forget, how, stung with the studied carelessness of his first salutation: "Why, Jenny, how you are grown!" she had answered, as it seemed in spite of herself: "Yes; grown out of all knowledge." Throughout the rest of their brief interview, she had been cold as snow; but that one sentence of reproach, forced from her, doubtless, by the sense of insult which his words had occasioned, still rang in his ears. And how beautiful, and like a gentlewoman, she had grown, and how, in comparison with her, had all other gentle-

women, such as his aunt, or Blanche (he would not even to himself say, or "Helen"), dwindled into insignificance. She had been always far cleverer than himself, he knew; but what a divine wisdom seemed now to dwell in those glorious eyes, yet not unmixed with pity either, when she denied his prayer—such pity as the angel might have felt whose duty it had been to expel our first parents from the Gates of Paradise! And yet she was a woman too, for had she not trembled and changed colour when he had denounced her refusal to let him write to her as having been the cause of their estrangement, and did not those signs betoken that she still loved him! He did not so much *still* love *her* (though all the old passion was revived within him), as love her *anew*, more fondly, more fiercely, than he had ever loved before; and in a few weeks he was pledged to wed, not her, but another!

The river-side path, that led to the lock as well as to the inn, lay before him, and

he regarded it with wistful eyes. Should he take that, or the upper one, which led to the village churchyard, wherein stood his father's tomb, to visit which had been the object he had proposed to himself in going forth that morning? Something within him seemed to whisper that at whichever decision he should arrive it would be final. As he hesitated, there fell on his ear a splash of a pole in the water, and there glided by up-stream a punt, with a fisherman in it, bound, doubtless, for the osier-nets that hung in the back-water behind the lock. This trifling circumstance decided him. If he *was* to meet Jenny, it was certainly advisable that there should be no possible witness to their interview; and he struck at once into the path that conducted to the church. It was the nearest way to the village, likewise, for all the water-side parishioners, running straight up through the meadows, and dipping midway into a hazel coppice, in which was a rustic bridge that spanned a little tributary of the

river, but little frequented save on Sundays. The last time he had trodden it, it had been by his father's side to church, on the eve of his own departure for abroad. They had not been so cordial as father and son should be; there were faults on both sides; but now that the old man was beyond the reach of all amends, they seemed to have been on Arthur's only. And yet a few minutes ago he had been debating in his mind as to whether this little pilgrimage of piety should not be postponed, for—well, for what? For a mad attempt to throw himself in the way of temptation; for an appeal to Jenny's feelings, that would be worse than hopeless, since, even if it should have succeeded, nothing could have come of it but shame and ruin. He could not shut her from his thoughts on the way, or even when upon the hill-top he stood beside his father's grave. Why had the old man been so stern, that confidence had never existed between them? How far nearer would he have now seemed to him had he been

encouraged to disclose the secret wish of his young heart, even if it had been denied him? But now death had divided them indeed. If Jack had died, and been laid here, who had been privy to that early hope, and to almost every thought and action of his life, how differently he would have felt; a portion of his very self would then seem to be lying yonder, whereas, though this was his own flesh and blood, and the author of his being, it did not seem so. Suppose his father had given him permission to marry Jenny, and instead of becoming an exile from home and country, he had done so, and, filled with love and gratitude, had been his son indeed, with little children to climb the old man's knee, and—since a lonesome life is hurtful to health as well as heart—to win him, perhaps, from the very grave itself. This thought of what might have been was too much to bear, and he turned away almost abruptly from the graveyard, and began to retrace his steps. Quick motion suited with his mood, and the way

being down hill, he advanced very rapidly, with eyes fixed on the ground ; so rapidly, that half-way through the copse, he came upon the narrow wooden bridge, and had his foot upon it before he perceived that it was already occupied by some one coming from the river-side. He looked up hastily, and lo, it was Jenny Renn !

She stood for an instant in the middle of the bridge, undecided whether to retreat or advance, and with her hand upon the side-rail—a picture and a poem in one—then came on slowly towards him.

"Jenny, Jenny!" cried Arthur, eagerly, holding out both his hands.

"My name is Alice Renn, Mr. Tyndall," was her cold reply.

"I thought that, seeing me from the river, you might have come to meet me," said he, imploringly.

"No. I was going to the church to practise on the organ ; for I am the organist now."

The organist ! Then he would hear her

on Sunday, and every Sunday, from his pew, where he would be sitting with Helen. He would know she was behind the little curtain, looking down between its folds upon himself with scorn, upon his bride with pity.

"I have behaved very, very ill to you, Jenny"—— he began.

She stopped him with a quiet motion of her hand. "I do not say so, Mr. Tyndall; but if it is so, let me tell you this, that you behave worse in speaking of it." She was very pale, but her voice was firm and resolute. As she stood erect upon the bridge, from which he had withdrawn, to let her pass, she was taller than he; and he felt she was his superior every way.

"I will not confess my baseness, since you forbid me to do so, Jenny," said he, dejectedly; "but do not suppose that I am not punished for it. If you knew all, even though you could not love me any longer, you must needs pity me."

"If any misfortune has befallen you, I

am indeed sorry," returned she—"very sorry."

"No misfortune, for I have brought it all upon myself—no misfortune, since, compared with that of which I may not speak, all ills that may happen to me are of small amount; but, for one thing, I am a ruined man."

"I thought so!" gasped the girl; not, however, like one who hears the worst. There was a certain tone of relief, nay, almost of exultation, in her ejaculation. "I thought so!" It seemed to say: "I thought that nothing but dire necessity could have compelled him to such conduct."—"Ruined, Mr. Tyndall!" she continued; "that is bad news indeed. A few weeks, however, as I understand, will retrieve your fallen fortunes." Her woman's heart could not refrain from giving him that stab; then perceiving she had wounded him to the quick, it melted within her. "Forgive me, sir; I did not mean to pain you; far from it. Heaven knows I wish nought but good to

you—to you and yours. But no more meetings such as this, I pray you." Here she sobbed most pitifully; and he sprang forward, as he would have done five years ago, to comfort her.

She thrust him from her with some force, and pointed towards the Hall. "Leave me, sir. As you are a gentleman, I entreat you to leave me."

He obeyed her, but unwillingly; slowly, lingeringly, he went on his way, with many a look behind. She stood where she was, leaning against the bridge-rail, and never turned her face towards him. Then presently, when she had recovered a little, she began to climb the hill, like one who carries on his shoulder a burden as great as he can bear. He felt that he must never speak to Jenny again in *that* way—in the way he had attempted to speak to her—unless he could show a better right to do so; unless—well, unless, for one thing, three thousand pounds that he owed to Mr. Paul Jones should fall from the clouds. That Jenny loved him as

dearly as ever, he had now no doubt; her very dread of "such meetings as that" was a proof of it; and this conviction, though he knew it was basely selfish to do so, he welcomed in his secret heart. It was sweet to think that, for his sake, she had kept herself heart-whole through all those weary years, though, doubtless, she might have wedded a better man—Mr. Glyddon, for instance. Arthur had not forgotten the expression of the rector's countenance when he first met him on the lock-bridge. "Was it all really over?"—that old tenderness he used to have for Jenny—it had seemed to ask, and "was her heart free to receive a new tenant?"

Perhaps this was but a morbid fancy; but it was contrary to his experience that his ritualistic friend should go a-fishing, and, in accordance with it, that he might be pretending to fish. Even if it was so, "would it not be well for Jenny?" was an idea that did not occur to him. She seemed to be too good for anybody, even for himself; but if

she were his own, he would at least appreciate her as no other man could do. Cruelly, faithlessly as he had behaved to her, he would make amends for all, if once she were his. He was giving himself up to that intoxicating thought—as to those dreams of banquets when starving on the barren sea — when suddenly the breakfast gong sounded from the Hall, and through the trees he saw his Helen waiting, eager-eyed, to greet him on the lawn.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CONSIDERATE CHALLENGE.

FOR the next few days, Helen could no more complain of her lover being preoccupied and *distrait:* he was feverishly gay. Since thought oppressed him, he put it from him altogether—that is, in company, and when it was possible to do so. He talked small-talk to Mrs. Somers; discussed old times with Blanche and her mother; rattled on with Helen, though avoiding the tender subject to which she would have led him; rallied Allardyce on his cynicism, and joined in "making hay" of Paul Jones,

and all the time was scarcely aware of what he was saying, or of what was said to him in return. To Adair and Uncle Magus he spoke but little; the former knew too well what he was thinking about—what he was trying not to think about—and there was always a chance of his recurring to that painful topic. The latter required to be listened to, and Arthur could not listen—could scarce endure a pause. Thus it happened, though playing well his part of host except that he somewhat over-acted it—he was, in reality, in ignorance of what was going on under his own roof. He did not know—perhaps, so far as he himself was concerned, he would not much have cared—that Allardyce's manner towards Helen had become earnest at all times, and sympathetically confidential when opportunity served, so much so that even charitable Mrs. Tyndall had pronounced it to be "objectionable," and simple Mrs. Somers "too marked." He did not observe that, for some reason or other, Mr. Paul Jones

was exquisitely uncomfortable, that Uncle Magus was stiffer in his manner than usual, and that Jack Adair was unusually grave and silent. He took no interest in anything about him, with one exception. He hailed the coming of night, because it brought with it the excitement of the gaming-table; the chances it did not bring, for there never came one turn of luck in his favour.

Night after night, up in the smoking-room, the cards were brought out, and three men sat down to play, and one looked on, and puffed at his huge meerschaum pipe, as though keeping it alight was the whole object he had upon his mind. There was nothing new in the result of this amusement, but the stakes were higher, and the "I O U's" with Arthur Tyndall's autograph attached to them, more numerous and for heavier figures than they had ever been. Irritated by ill fortune, urged by the desire to retrieve it, and thirsting more than usual for excitement, Arthur had once proposed to play in the daytime, but to this the others

would not accede. "What *would* the ladies say" [who had no idea that they played at all, or if they did, supposed it to be a quiet rubber of whist], "if they should desert their company for cards?"

The Hon. Wynn Allardyce was quite shocked at the idea of such a solecism in good manners. Of course, if the ladies had not been in the house, he would have been charmed to play. All hours and days were alike to him; in daylight, one's head was clearer and better for that which he frankly owned was the great business and pleasure of his life; but as to behaving rudely towards the fair sex, he was quite incapable of it. Without Allardyce, loo was impossible, so nothing more was said about it; and Arthur was compelled to wait for "his revenge" till evening, when he lost a thousand pounds before midnight.

"That will do, gentlemen," said he with a bitter laugh; "I am obliged to you;" and rising from the table, he wrote a memorandum of the amount, which Mr. Paul

Jones added to the collection in his pocket-book.

When a man has lost heavily, it is not wise to trouble him with questions, or else more than one of his hearers would have liked to ask him why he was "obliged" to these fortunate antagonists of his for easing him of another thousand pounds.

"I don't like Tyndall's form," observed Allardyce to Jones as they parted soon afterwards at the door of the former's chamber. "I'd sooner he was restive, and even downright savage with us, than that he should take this grimly humorous turn."

"I don't think we shall get much more out of that quarter, myself," assented Jones.

"Here, just step in a minute," said the other; then when the room door was shut, "there is not much more to get, Paul. My fear is that we may never realise those little securities, of which we are already possessed."

"They are as good as gold, my good

sir," returned Mr. Paul Jones confidently. "That girl of his will do anything for him, and she will have thirty 'thou.' in ready money."

"But suppose he doesn't marry the girl?"

"Not marry her? Oh, but he must. It would be deuced dishonourable—I mean to *us*—if he didn't. Besides, she is so spoony on him, that she would never let him off, even if he wished it. Why do you look like that? You don't mean to say, Lardy, that you are so infernally selfish as to be up to any tricks in that quarter? Upon my soul, if I thought you were capable of such folly, I'd——"

"Don't threaten, Paul," returned the other coolly; "it's a part you are not fitted to play, at least with *me*. I can easily believe, however, that it would make you very angry if I carried off this Helen from her Menelaus."

"You may, for all I care—when he has married her," replied Jones brutally.

"Exactly so; when he has married and settled—his debts. But suppose, instead of marrying the girl, he were to blow his brains out?"

"Don't talk of such things," remonstrated the other with a shiver; "I hate them. What do you mean, Lardy?"

"I mean," said Allardyce gravely, "that in my opinion it is even betting that Tyndall puts himself out of the way to-night. You heard what he said: 'That will do, gentlemen; I am obliged to you.' Why should he be obliged to us for winning more than ever of him? It may be only a coincidence, but those were the very words that Charles Sloper used at the hazard-table at Newmarket, before he made his hole in the water. What *he* meant was, that he was thankful to have his mind made up for him at last by losing more money than it was possible for him to pay. Those bitter jests are a bad sign in a fellow like Tyndall, and I tell you I don't like his form."

"I wish we were well out of this house," observed Mr. Paul Jones hoarsely, and turning very pale.

"With all our assets realised? So do I, begad! How much have you in all?"

"I have four thousand eight hundred pounds in 'I O U's.' If we get cash for them, we shall have cleared nearly four thousand pounds each out of this little speculation."

"And we *shall* clear it, never fear, Paul," said Allardyce confidently, "if only Tyndall lives. Don't fear, man; how white you look! You were out of sorts at dinner to-day, I noticed, and didn't take your wine. You took enough of it yesterday, however, to last for twice."

"Yes, I took too much. When a fellow has taken too much, he ain't answerable for his actions, is he?"

"I should be sorry to say that, Paul; a good many fellows who have paid us money might have got off on that plea."

"Well, not for his words, at all events?"

"What the devil are you driving at?" exclaimed Allardyce savagely. "You have not been telling things in your cups, have you? If you have said one word to my discredit, drunk or sober; if you have dared to peach on *me* in any maudlin fit, I'll——" He had him by the cravat by this time, and his hold was tightening in it.

"Be quiet, Lardy. I've never said a word about you," gasped the other; "I'd not be such a fool."

"Gad, you're right there, sir. You'd be a fool indeed to try to drag Wynn Allardyce down with you, because you felt yourself falling. I'd make short work with *you*, if nothing else was left me to do."

"I didn't say you wouldn't," said Jones sulkily; "but I do say it's cursed ungrateful of you to talk so. Don't I take all the risk? Wasn't the order to Darwin written by me; and isn't it I who have the odium of winning all this money, which is afterwards to be divided between us? Why, if there was a row here to-morrow, what with

your ignorance of this, and your never dreaming of that, and your being own brother to a viscount—you'd prove yourself as immaculate as the driven snow."

"If I didn't, it would be your fault, Paul; and thence, believe me, your misfortune."

"That's right; threaten again. That's the way to make friends."

"It's the way to *keep* friends with some people, Paul. It is often wondered at why we go through the world like Damon and Pythias. 'How can you put up with that low fellow, Paul Jones?' says one. I only laugh and shrug my shoulders; but I could tell them the reason if I chose. 'There is the bond between us of a common interest.' Another says: 'How can you trust that slippery beggar the Pirate?' My answer would do you good to hear it: 'I have the most perfect confidence in Paul.' There is no occasion to add this reason, which I may state, however, in confidence to yourself: 'I trust him because he has a knowledge of my own character, and very well

understands that if he deceived me--or betrayed me, which is the same thing—I'd have his heart's blood.' You are a very clever fellow, Paul; but you lack what our friend Tyndall and *his* dear friend, Adair, and any number of dull-witted fellows I could name to you, possess in plenty: you've got no pluck—at least when you're sober, for, I am bound to say, you are impudent enough when the wine is in you: the manner in which you went in at old Magus yesterday, for example, beat cock-fighting at Dudley Woodside. Well, that puts you at a disadvantage. You can't act independently; you are obliged to employ a bully."

"That's you," growled Mr. Jones.

"I know it, my dear Paul. If a man were to say: 'your friend Jones cheats at cards,' I'd have him out at twelve paces."

"Pooh, pooh! nobody fights duels nowadays."

"Don't be so sure of that, Paul. At all events, I'm ready to do so, and men know it. Now, I suppose you'd rather lose a

thousand pounds than face a pistol. I'd give half the money down to see you at it: '*Are you ready, Mr. Jones?*'—'*No, I'm not ready—far from it.*' Lor, what fun! And yet it would be the very best thing in the world for your reputation; and it would make a gentleman and a man of honour of you for life."

"I'd rather be as I am," said Mr. Paul Jones, naïvely. "If you've quite done threatening and boasting, I'll go to bed."

"Boasting; nay, there was no need to boast of what I would do in case you played me false, for you must have known it in your poor little timorous heart, years and years ago. The very idea of your doing so made me wild, that's all. Forgive me, Paul, and good-night. If you hear a shot before morning, lie still and keep your head under the clothes. It won't be robbers; and yet it will mean to you and me that we have lost two thousand four hundred pounds apiece."

This thought was not an agreeable one

to go to bed upon, but it was not the most disturbing reflection that agitated Mr. Jones' breast that night. No sooner had he reached his own room, and locked the door, than an expression of hopeless agony took the place of that of discomfort and uneasiness which had characterised his physiognomy throughout the day, and he sank down in a chair like some malefactor, who, from weakness or terror, is "accommodated with a seat" upon the scaffold.

"What a hardhearted, ungrateful, selfish villain he is!" groaned Mr. Paul Jones. "If ever there was an opportunity for a man to prove himself a friend—that is," added he hastily, "'a friend' in a good sense, not an abettor of a murder—there was one offered to Allardyce to-night; but he is a mere heartless, merciless cynic. Instead of doing his best to get me out of the scrape, he'd foment the quarrel; if I intrusted him with an apology, he'd make it an insult—a second insult. O dear me! To whom am I to turn for help against

this Fire-eater, this Blood-sucker, this Vampire in human form !"

Mr. Paul Jones wrung his hands—a very mournful peal—and then took from his pocket such a letter as you seldom see in these degenerate days. It had no envelope, but was formed of an immense sheet of paper, folded squarely, and fastened by a seal of gigantic proportions, bearing the impression of a coat of arms. If the Queen in council had decided upon making Mr. Paul Jones Lord Chief-justice of the Queen's Bench, or Speaker of the House of Commons, it is probable she would have addressed to him some such document, and sealed it with some such seal. The communication, however, came from Uncle Magus, and had been delivered by that gentleman's own hands, that very morning, in the Box Tree Walk, in stately silence, but with every formality that the occasion demanded ; and thus ran its contents, or thus they walked rather, in punctilious and high-flown style, as though each word was dancing a minuet :

"The Cottage, Swansdale.

"SIR—I am quite aware of the impropriety of addressing you personally, upon the subject hereafter to be mentioned, but unhappily I have no choice. It is even possible that the affair in question may have to be brought to a conclusion altogether without the intervention of a third person. Such a case, however, it may be some satisfaction to you to learn, is not wholly without precedent. In 1613 A.D. the Lord Bruce and Sir Edward Sackville fought with short swords at Tergoso, a town in Zealand, without seconds, though it is true each had his surgeon, who might be considered as such. The affair was exceptional in many respects, such as their fighting ankle-deep in water in their shirts, and with the mutual understanding that one at least should leave his life upon the field; but from the rank and honour of the combatants, this encounter has been always placed among just and legitimate duellos. It is impossible, sir, as you will easily

perceive, for one situated as I am to secure the services of a friend in this delicate matter: I have (alas!) no friends, save one — my nephew; himself too nearly connected with the subject of our quarrel to be applied to under any circumstance; and though I have no manner of objection to you coming to the Releager [or place of meeting] attended by a friend, it will probably be more consonant with your feelings to waive that advantage, and go through with the affair, like your antagonist, alone. Moreover, this course recommends itself, upon the ground that a little secret of this sort is only too apt to leak out, which in these days often results in disappointment to both parties, and the adjournment of the meeting *sine die*, if not to its being put a stop to altogether. In our case, indeed, this last mishap is rendered impossible; for, as I have already had the honour to tell you, nothing but your blood can wipe out the insult that has been put upon my house by you, nor shall any length of time, or

distance of place, prevent my procuring satisfaction for it. Should a man refuse me what is my due under such circumstances, I would pistol him, wherever I met him, and should make it my business to meet him at an early opportunity. I am well convinced, however, that such a menace is out of place in your case, who, I doubt not—notwithstanding your conduct when overtaken with wine—are a gentleman of the nicest honour. At the same time, I do not conceal from myself that your age—for, compared with myself, you are still young—and the mode of life in which you have been brought up, may have rendered you ignorant—not, indeed, of the demands of honour, which are common, I hope, to all ages and all times, but of those details of conduct which were once familiar to every gentleman in connection with the duello, and (what is of even more consequence, of those precautions which it is well to take before proceeding to the Releager. Fortunately, however, I

have made the subject my study, and beg, sir, to forward you certain memoranda—the results of a long experience—which may be of use to you, and tend to place us on a more equal footing. I take it for granted that the pistol is your weapon—though any other" ["The umbrella," was the brilliant thought that flashed upon Mr. Jones' mind upon the first reading of this epistle, but the context robbed him of that consolatory idea]—"though any other among *the recognised arms of the duello* is equally familiar to me. Accordingly, I beg to inclose certain extracts from my manuscript notes having relation to that arm, together with some hints of a general nature, and beg to subscribe myself, yours obediently and to command,

"DANVERS TYRONE MAGUS.

"P.S.—I have only to add, that though any hour or place is the same to me, I would venture to suggest to you, as a stranger, that at early morning there is

seldom any one stirring in the neighbourhood of Swansdale Churchyard, and that the small common to which it is contiguous has always struck me as being peculiarly well adapted for such a meeting as we have in view."

"What a cold-blooded, calculating, murderous old devil it is!" ejaculated Mr. Paul Jones; "and how he sets all law and morality at defiance! He'll 'make it his business,' he says—and, I don't doubt, his pleasure too—if I don't consent to meet him, to pistol me at the earliest opportunity. Why, that's downright murder; and yet the worst of it is, nobody, except myself, would believe him capable of it. I'd swear the peace against him; but what's the good of binding a man over not to shoot you for six months who is resolutely determined to do it on the seventh! What have *I* done?" cried Mr. Jones, looking pitifully about him, and appealing, in default of an audience of his fellow-

creatures, to various articles of bedroom furniture—"What have *I* done, to make me the subject of this old ruffian's vengeance? Nothing, absolutely nothing, beyond mentioning within his hearing, after dinner yesterday, the indisputable fact that Tyndall was going to marry for money.

"'Did I understand you to state, sir, that my nephew Arthur was about to contract matrimony from mercenary motives?' was what the old beggar said; whereupon, little knowing what he was driving at, and indeed not thinking of anything very much beside how good the claret had been, I replied: 'Most certainly, old gentleman, your nephew, Arthur, put himself up to auction in the matrimonial mart, and has fetched a most uncommonly good price. And quite right too,' I added hastily, for I never saw an old gent look more vicious; but *that* didn't smooth his fur down, not a bit, but seemed rather to rub it the wrong way.

"'You shall repent this, as sure as you're

a living man,' cried he, and he looked like a turkey-cock. And then he comes to me this morning while I was smoking my cigar, in peace and innocence, and puts this cartel (as he calls it) into my hand—I'd ten times sooner it had been a writ—and then retires in silence and complete armour (as it seemed) like the ghost in *Hamlet*. As for his giving me hints on the etiquette of the duello, and suggesting precautions against his own murderous designs, that seems to me the worst of it all, because it shows his implacability of purpose. He's mad, of course—a criminal lunatic broken out of a medieval asylum, but that makes him all the more dangerous. If he was a sensible man, I'd give him a thousand pounds, and square it that way; but no reasonable being could ever write such stuff as this :

" ' It is advisable that, on the night before a gentleman has an affair of honour on hand, he should carefully avoid drinking to excess, or taking any food that tends to

create bile, and especially to keep his mind from dwelling upon the coming encounter.' —Was ever any suggestion so preposterous ?" commented Mr. Paul Jones. "For who *could* avoid drinking to excess with such a horrid morning's work before him, or, if he did, how could he possibly fix his mind upon anything else ? As to taking any food to create bile, I'm sure I've felt all to-day as though it would have choked me to swallow so much as a slice of bread-and-butter. To read this fellow, one would think that the fact of a duel on hand whetted the appetite like a bloater!

"'To eat a hearty breakfast, is wrong,' says he. 'I am not one of those who subscribe to the opinion that it is as well for a man to fill his stomach on such occasions. Let him drink a cup of coffee and take a biscuit with it directly he rises; then, in washing his face, attend to bathing his eyes well with cold water. If in the habit of wearing flannel next his skin'" [Mr. Jones mechanically thrust a finger in the inter-

stices of his shirt-front, and turned paler even than before], "'he should omit putting it on. Wounds comparatively trifling' [What a demon! what a murderous, mocking, remorseless fiend!" muttered the commentator] "'have often become dangerous from pieces of flannel being carried into them; but in other matters let him make no change in his usual habits. If he smokes, let him take a cigar, and, if a married man, avoid disturbing his wife and children. About six in the morning is the best time for meeting in the summer.'—And the immediate vicinity of a churchyard the most convenient spot!" groaned Mr. Jones; "this is horror upon horror indeed!—'He should himself observe that the pistol-case is furnished with every necessary, instances having occurred more than once of the pistols being left behind in the confusion of starting, subjecting the parties of course to much inconvenience and ridicule.'—I don't see the inconvenience, and I could survive the ridicule," muttered

Mr. Jones. "But there would be no hope of that sort; this old devil will doubtless have a whole armoury of pistols.—'The period most trying to a duellist is doubtless from the time the word "ready" is given until the handkerchief drops.'—I won't read any more," cried Mr. Jones, passing *his* handkerchief over his forehead, which was in a state of profuse perspiration. "I feel ready to 'drop' myself. If Allardyce were worth a pinch of salt—— But ah! I have it!" A gleam of hope stole over his pallid face: he unlocked and softly opened his door, then retraced his way stealthily along the passage towards the smoking-room. "If he is not there," he muttered, "I will go to his bedroom. It's a matter of life and death."

END OF VOL. I.

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